

# Kenepuru & Central Sounds



Kenepuru & Central Sounds Residents Association Inc.

The Chief Executive

Marlborough District Council

Blenheim

30 April 2024

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30 April 2024

Dear Sir

## **Submission – Council Long Term Plan 2024/2034 - General Roothing Matters**

1. This submission concerns selected aspects of the Council consultation process re the proposed Long Term Plan 2024/2034 and is made on behalf of the Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association (**Association**).

### **Introduction**

2. **Who we are:** We are a voluntary community organization with few resources, other than the experience and skills of our Committee members, and since 1991 have endeavored to represent the interests of our many members (currently around 300, mainly household members) on a variety of local issues.

3. **Why we are concerned:** The main road into our region is the Kenepuru Road Network. It is one of the larger if not the largest rural roads network in the region. Including side roads it is around 120km, with both sealed and unsealed sections. It is a road of prime importance to this region. Accordingly, a core work stream, since incorporation, for the Associations elected voluntary Committees has been the delivery of a safe, efficient and reliable Kenepuru road network.

4. We are alert to the possibility that achieving these outcomes for the Sounds may require new operating methods or an assessment of the current contractual arrangements. We also engage regularly, in a structured way, with Council and its main contractor - Marlborough Roads, being the Marlborough office of the New Zealand Transport Agency – on operational roading matters.

5. **Focus of this submission:** In this submission we concentrate on some general roading operational matters. In particular the need to fund what we see as a staffing gap in looking to optimize the spend and outcomes by Council. Accordingly, the main topic of this submission is looking at what we see as the pressing need for Council to fund and recruit a suitably qualified and experienced **Council in-house roading engineer** to more effectively monitor and improve the outcomes from its current

contractual arrangements, particularly in relation to rural roads.

## **The case for an in-house Council Roding Engineer**

6. **Why the need:** As noted above satisfactory routine maintenance outcomes for the Kenepuru Road network have always been a core concern for the Association's Committee. About seven years ago it became apparent to the then Committee that roading outcomes for the Sounds were sub-standard. Accordingly, as noted above over the last six years the Committee has taken a very "hands on" role in looking to improve roading outcomes.

7. Currently, Council has **no** in-house specialist roading engineer expertise. As a result of our intensive involvement and contact with the workings of the existing roading contractual structure and the outcomes it delivers (or not) the Committee has become increasingly concerned that in the absence of an in-house Council roading engineer there is an excessive reliance on advice from NZTA and other contractors.

8. As we detail in our Submission on the Councils Regional Land Transport Plan the use of by Marlborough Roads of the very long term Network Outcomes Contract (NOC) structure, is not, we submit, delivering the efficiencies and more particularly the cost effective and resilient roading operational outcomes the community can reasonably expect. For the detail as to why we make this statement please refer to the Association's submission on the Marlborough Regional Land Transport Plan.

9. However, prior to the July 2021 and August 2022 storm events we were cautiously optimistic that the NZTA contractual arrangements with its newish contractors (the JV of Fulton Hogan/HEBS) could result in better local roading outcomes.

10. These storm events have proved a real challenge for all concerned with the efficiency and availability of the Kenepuru road network. The community has suffered real stress as a result of the consequences of the storm events and disruption to the availability of the Kenepuru Road and its ongoing state of non-repair.

11. In light of the aftermath of the July 2021 and August 2022 storm events the Association sees the lack of an in-house roading engineer as a real impediment to Council securing timely, cost efficient and effective roading repair and maintenance outcomes.

12. The proposed Sounds Recovery program is an area that we submit calls out for the funding of an in-house Council roading engineer position.

13. The completion of repairs to the significantly damaged road networks both in the Kenepuru and elsewhere in the Marlborough region is likely to be with us for at least the first four years of this Long Term Plan. The ratepayer funding requirements are significant and will bring greater expectation and scrutiny from and by ratepayers and the likes of the Association.

14. We also respectfully suggest that having this in-house expertise should also improve efficacy around the administration of roading contracts generally.

15. Further, we are not suggesting something that is unusual in the Councils outsourcing arrangements. We demonstrate this by looking at another service core service delivery area. - Waste management.

16. Again operational control of this core function has been outsourced by way of a medium term contract. However, for this core function, by our count, Council has retained two experienced and

professionally skilled in-house staff - a waste management expert and a suitably qualified waste engineer. Both report to and provide expert advice to the Assets and Services Manager. This seems both a sensible and prudent outcome both operationally and from a governance point of view.

17. **Time is right:** We note that the response to our submission on this matter last year was that a Mr Steve Murrin of Marlborough Roads (NZTA) had been seconded to Council and was fulfilling that role. We understand that arrangement has now finished Accordingly; we submit it is an opportune time for Council to reconsider the matter of funding and securing an experienced in-house roading engineer.

18. **Funding Request:** Accordingly, we respectfully request that funding in this Long Terms Plan be allocated for an in-house roading engineer, reporting to the Assets and Services manager.

19. We are prepared to discuss in more detail, at the hearing, what we see as the key matters making up the job description of such a role and the range of desirable professional skills and experience such a person should have.

### **Long Term Plan – General Roothing matters – Other Matters**

20. **LTP Metalling provision:** In the section of the Long Term Plan dealing with General Roothing matters we were pleased to see a modest but useful funding allocation to unsealed road metalling. We note this because a significant section of the Kenepuru Road network is unsealed. Accordingly the timing and competency of the grading and metalling of this unsealed section is of significant interest to many of our members. We submit in support for such an allocation but query how this allocation was arrived at.

21. **Regional Land Transport Plan and review of NOC:** As we detail in our Submission on the Councils Regional Land Transport Plan the use by Marlborough Roads of the very long term Network Outcomes Contract (NOC) structure, is not, we submit, delivering the efficiencies and more particularly the cost effective and resilient roading operational outcomes the community desires.

22. For the detail as to why we make this statement please refer to the Association's submission on the Marlborough Regional Land Transport Plan. In that submission **we recommend**, after a careful examination of what we see as the short comings of the NOC set up, that there be a independent review commissioned in order to effectively deliver the RTLP Transport Priority Area 3 – Maintenance,

23. The purpose of such review would be to assess the efficacy of current contractual arrangements in terms of delivering timely, competent, outcomes for standard maintenance and repair of rural roads such as the Sounds Road network. Where appropriate the reviewers report should make recommendations as to change.

24. We stress that this is very much in line with government thinking as to the creation of road efficiency group to look at:

*“finding efficiencies in road maintenance, standardizing maintenance protocols, reducing expenditure on temporary traffic management, and reviewing maintenance contracts”*

Accordingly in the context of this Long Term Plan submission we submit that a funding allocation be made by Council for such an independent review.

25. **Road Man Crew Initiative:** As noted above prior to the July 2021 and August 2022 storm events the Committee was cautiously optimistic that work we had put into suggesting better operational procedures and methodologies to Council/Marlborough Roads with its newish contractors (the JV of Fulton Hogan/HEBS) arrangements result in better local roading outcomes.

26. What we were hoping for was the modern equivalent of the Roadman of old. A team that took both ownership and pride in a particular Network. Preferably a small efficient group of local contractors carrying out regular planned preventative maintenance. The tentative introduction of a Cyclic Road team with some “ownership” of a given section of the Network albeit Blenheim based gave us some hope. However the Storm events of July and August 2020 and 2021 seem to stymie this initiative.

27. Accordingly we submit that if such an initiative can not be procured or agreed with the JV then a trial using locally based and competent contractors be funded for the Kenepuru Road network in this Long Term Plan. Should such trial prove successful (and we strongly believe it will on travel efficiencies alone) then when the existing NOC contract finally comes to an end we submit that careful review be given to separate out this aspect from the NOC with a direct medium term contract between the Road Man crew and Council.

#### **Attendance at Hearing**

28. The Association thanks the Council for the opportunity to make submissions on the Long Term Plan. The Association wishes to talk to the above submissions at the hearing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Andrew Coddie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

President

Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association