



The Chief Executive

Marlborough District Council

Blenheim

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Dear Sir

Request to Engage - Council Annual Plan 2025/2026 - Ideas or worthwhile Projects - Roadman

1. I am writing to you in my capacity as President of the Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association (**Association**).

2. Late last year Council advised that it was changing the previous consultation process by which citizens were invited to make submissions on the proposed Annual Plan. Going forward the process by which community input would be sought would be by way of an engagement process. The Council media statement announcing this change invited Marlborough citizens to tell Council about "...*your big idea or worthwhile project*".

3. The Association has such an idea, which, in our opinion, would significantly reduce an item of Council expenditure and improve and enhance outcomes. First some background.

Background

4. **Who we are:** We are a voluntary community organization with our strength being the experience and skills of our Committee members. Since 1991 we have endeavored to represent the interests of our many members (currently around 300, mainly household members) on a variety of local issues.

5. **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 Marlborough region. Including side roads it is around 120km, with both sealed and gravel sections. It is a road of prime importance to a large community, visitors and other users. Accordingly, a core work stream, since incorporation, for the Association's elected voluntary Committees has been the delivery of a safe, efficient and reliable Kenepuru road network.

6. A basic tenet of securing a safe, efficient and reliable network is for it to be well maintained. Over the last five or six years we have become increasingly concerned that the basic roading maintenance operations for the Kenepuru road network (and other more isolated rural road networks) such as

cleaning culverts, water tables and regular grading of the gravel sections was not being done well, cost efficiently or in a timely and regular manner.

7. This issue, we believe, **exacerbated the damage** to the network from the significant storm events of July 2021 and August 2022.

The Big Idea – Bring back the locally based roadman

8. Council roading maintenance and repair operations expenditure is funded partly by Council ratepayers. It is the biggest line expenditure item in the Council budget.

9. It makes no sense, fiscal or otherwise, for Council and Central Government (NZTA) to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on the Marlborough rural road network storm repairs and then skimp or overlook the unglamorous, but not technically difficult, essential regular road maintenance and repairs.

10. Our “Big Idea” is to create the modern equivalent of the roadman of old. This was someone locally based responsible for regular inspection and tidy-ups concerning the small simple maintenance works that arise in any rural road network and if not speedily addressed become bigger and more expensive - a stitch in time etc. Further, there was more rapport and cooperation between the locally based crew and the community. Shorter chains of command were also an important positive outcome.

11. Accordingly, we suggest that a trial using locally based and competent contractors be funded in this Annual Plan for taking care of this low-level road repair and maintenance in the Kenepuru road network. Should such a trial prove successful (and we strongly believe it will on reduced mileage costs alone) then, when the current Network Outcome Contract (NOC) finally comes to an end, this aspect could be separated out from the next NOC and replaced with a direct contract between the locally based contractor crew and Council.

12. The tentative introduction of a Cyclic Road team by the Council contractor - Marlborough Roads - has, unfortunately, not delivered. An obvious flaw is that it seemed Blenheim based and rotated the crews around the network. In other words no ownership plus significant mileage and travel time costs.

13. We are very willing to discuss with you in greater detail why the current NOC set up misses the mark when it comes to the timely and efficient maintenance of the rural road network. But what we want to do today is put that to one side and focus on a way through this impasse as outlined above.

Conclusion

14. We wish to thank the Council for this opportunity to engage on the Annual Plan. We would be pleased to sit down with you and talk through the idea we have raised and why it would improve current outcomes on all metrics.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Caddie

President, Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association.