



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 - Need for an in-house independent Council Road Engineer

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 by encouraging efficiencies and also 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. Accordingly our idea concerns 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 the significant and important Marlborough region rural road networks.

The case for an in-house Council Roding Engineer

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

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 (Marlborough Roads) and other contractors.

8. 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.

9. 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.

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

11. The completion of recovery repairs to the significantly damaged road networks both in the Kenepuru and elsewhere in the Marlborough region is likely to be with us for a number of years and Council is committed to fund a significant proportion (29%) of what is a large budget. As the ratepayer funding requirements are significant and will ramp up as the programme gets underway this will bring greater expectations and scrutiny from and by ratepayers and the likes of the Association. This long-term recovery program is an area that, we submit, calls out for the funding of an in-house Council roading engineer position to look to improve outcomes on all metrics.

12. **Other Benefits:** More broadly, we also respectfully suggest that having this in-house expertise should also improve efficacy around the administration of roading contracts generally.

13. **Not an unusual approach;** Further, **we stress we are not** suggesting something that is unusual in the Council's outsourcing arrangements. We demonstrate this by looking at another Council core service delivery area. - waste management.

14. 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

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 here (and in our other submission) and why it would improve current outcomes on all metrics.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Caddie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Andrew Caddie

President

Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association