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Submission to the Environment Canterbury draft Long Term Community Plan

by

The Avon-Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Trust (AHEIT)

Address for service

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The Trust wishes to speak to its submission at the hearing in Christchurch.

Our Submission to the Councillors of Environment Canterbury

Introduction and Summary

1. The Trust recognises and appreciates the difficult task Councillors have to provide the leadership and resources to manage effectively the large number of environmental issues that are currently facing Canterbury. The Trust is generally supportive of more resources being raised by way of rates and special user charges so these issues can be better addressed.
2. This submission is on two specific aspects of the draft LTCCP.

A. Continuation of financial support for the Trust and in particular for the Implementation of the Avon-Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Management Plan.

Refer to draft LTCCP. *Water Quality Quantity and Ecosystems section. Activity 4 Communicating Educating and Advocating. (page 78)* and to the *Project Levels of Service and Funding document page 49 action 0394* and to the *All Outputs Level of Service* document.

The Trust wishes to thank all ECan councillors for supporting the work of the Avon Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Trust since it was established in 2003. The Trust believes that there was a strong case for that support and that there is an equally strong case to extend that support in order to implement the Avon-Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Management Plan. The Trust asks that the level of financial commitment set out in the *All Outputs Level of Service* be approved.

The reasons why the Trust considers ECan should do this are set out later in this submission.

B. The initiation by ECan of the Canterbury Urban River Guardians project.

Refer to Draft LTCCP *Coastal Environment section. Activity 4. Communicating, Educating and Advocating. (page 25)* and to the *Project Levels of Service and Funding document page 6 and in particular action 0454*

The Trust strongly supports the provision for the establishment of a River Guardians programme, with the initial pilot project to be undertaken in Christchurch. The Trust proposes to be an active participant in that programme. There are strong environmental and strategic reasons for ECan to be initiating this programme in Christchurch at this time. The Trust asks that the resourcing levels for the Guardians programme that are set out in the *All Outputs Level of Service* document be approved.

Some of the reasons to do so are also set out later in this submission.

About the Trust

3. The Trust is a charitable society registered on 2003. It was formed as a result of community requests over many years for the formation of an organisation that included committed representation from ECan, the City Council and the mana whenua. The two councils and the mana whenua are members of the Board of the Trust, as provided for in the Trust's Deed.
4. A formal three way Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Trust, ECan and the City Council was signed by the chief executive of each organisation in 2003. The MOU emphasises working in partnerships as envisaged by the Local Government Act 2002. The MOU sets out expectations and other key elements of the interrelationships. This includes staff and financial support of the Trust by both councils and in particular support for the preparation and implementation of the

integrated non-statutory management plan for the Estuary, including its contributing rivers.

5. The Ihutai Management Plan was launched in September 2004 after receiving and evaluating feedback on the Draft Plan. The Plan is now being implemented. Detailed discussions have been held with both councils on linking the Councils own programmes to actions that are set out in the Plan, and on setting resourcing levels for these common areas. At the same time the Trust has had some success in obtaining grants from other agencies such as the Community Trust and the Lotteries grants board to undertake some of the actions in the Plan.
6. The Trust has a strong emphasis on developing partnerships to carry out projects and on using these partnerships to develop shared visions and programmes including solutions to environmental problems.
7. More information about the Trust, including its Vision statement, its Board, its Deed, The MOU and the Ihutai Plan can be viewed on the Trust's website at www.estuary.org.nz

Reasons why ECan should continue to support the Trust and the implementation of the Ihutai Management Plan

8. The section above sets out the history of the Trust and its special relationship with ECan and also with the Christchurch City Council. The Trust has been able to deliver a large range of environmental products because of the strong relationships and support it has with both councils, but particularly from Environment Canterbury. The Trust recognises both the opportunities and the heavy responsibilities it has to its council partners to continue to contribute to environmental outcomes for the Estuary, including its inflowing rivers and catchments.
9. The Trust proposes the following reasons why it is worthy of ECan's continuing support at the levels set out in the Project levels of service draft document
 - The Estuary and the rivers system are at the heart, rather than at the periphery, of any transition to a sustainable City of Christchurch.
 - ECan as the manager of water resources in particular has a huge contribution to achieving a sustainable city. Such a goal is important not just for those who live in Christchurch, but for all Cantabrians.

- The Trust believes that by partnering with ECan on a range of strategic Estuary projects it adds significant value to environmental outcomes.
- The Trust provides a high-profile working model of a three way partnership between two major local authorities and a broadly-based community organisation. It reflects the new mode of working with the community envisaged in the Local Government Act 2002.
- The Trust is well led and managed by a Board with considerable expertise in resource management and in business. It has robust financial reporting and record keeping procedures. The accounts are audited annually and a full report of past and proposed activities is made annually to the two Councils (eg the report to ECan of October 2005)
- The Trust is a can-do solutions-oriented organisation. It has a proven track record of outputs and the Ihutai Plan sets out clearly the programme of prioritised projects and activities to be implemented.
- The Trust has demonstrated its ability to initiate and complete substantial projects in partnership with the two councils and to obtain additional funding from independent organisations including the Lotteries Board and the Community Trust.
- The Ihutai Plan is a model integrating programme of action. It was the key product of the Trust referred to in the MOU with the two councils. Support to prepare and then to implement the Plan was a corner stone of the MOU.
- The Plan was developed by consensus around an agreed vision. As a non-statutory document it complements well the Regional Coastal Plan and the urban surface water management provisions of the NRRP. It has the flexibility to allow good things to be done quickly under a cooperative mandate.
- The Ihutai Plan was produced very quickly and at very low cost. The Trust is now focused on implementing the wide range of actions and projects in the plan. The Board of the Trust put an enormous amount of professional time into managing Trust projects as well as into governance of the Trust and strengthening key relationships. However, money and expert consultants and or council staff time are needed if many of the projects are to be

advanced at a reasonable level of skill and to a reasonable timetable.

- The line item “Support the Avon-Heathcote Estuary/Ihutai Trust” on page 25 is focused on funding the implementation of those measures in the Ihutai Plan which also fit within ECan functions and normal work programmes. (For those activities and projects in the Ihutai Plan that do not fit ECan's functions the Trust seeks funding from other agencies including the Lotteries Board and the Community Trust)

The Trust asks that the level of funding in the All Outputs/Levels of Service document be approved.

Reasons why ECan should initiate a Canterbury Urban River Guardians programme in Christchurch at this time

- The Avon and Heathcote Rivers have deteriorated seriously in recent years. Many members of the public are concerned about this, asking that ECan and the City Council show leadership on this issue and expressing a strong wish to be involved.
- This is a project of City-wide significance. Sustainable waterways underpin any wider objective of a sustainable City.
- This project complements and reinforces the recently negotiated Surfacewater Management Protocol for Christchurch. While this is a paradigm changing document the key details on priorities and timetables for implementation are yet to be developed and agreed on. Implementation will require strong public involvement and support. The River Guardians programme provides a mechanism to begin to engage the most interested and affected “downstream” members of the community in the wider issue about land use effects on surface waters.
- The River Guardian’s project is relatively non-controversial (cf the airshed management issues) and provides a great opportunity for ECan to be seen by its very significant Christchurch ratepayer base to be championing a strongly supported environmental issue.
- This project will be undertaken with the City Council as one of the partners. It provides an important opportunity to develop and demonstrate the synergies possible from working with the City Council. That is an approach that would be welcomed by Christchurch ratepayers of both Councils. The Combined

Christchurch Residents Association and the Ihutai Trust will together facilitate community participation in the project.

- This is a big project with big potential benefits for the numerical majority of the region's ratepayers. Because of its size and the profile that the project already it is likely to be able to proceed quickly and to have the capacity to develop in parallel, educational resources and toolkits that can be put to immediate use in other towns in Canterbury, including for example Timaru, Ashburton, Rangiora and Kaiapoi.
- The Trust's Deed and the Ihutai Plan both take an integrated catchment management approach. In so doing they define the geographic area of the Trust's interests as including the catchments and the rivers that flow into the Estuary. Water quality issues in the Estuary are most effectively handled at source. The issues arising from the Bromley treatment plant are now beyond their half-life. The Trust's focus is now increasingly turning to City-wide surface water management and restoring the ecological health of the Heathcote and Avon rivers. The Trust will therefore play an active part in the River Guardians project.

For the reasons above the Trust requests that the River Guardians programme be supported by the Council at the levels set out in the All Outputs Level of Service document.

After the first year a specific allocation of the project funding should be made for establishing River Guardians in other Canterbury towns.

The Trust wishes to thank ECan for the water sampling programmes in the Estuary (ie Activities 0233 and 0289) and in the Avon and Heathcote rivers, and asks that those programmes be continued.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.
The Trust looks forward to continuing its strong and productive relationship with Environment Canterbury councillors and staff.

Alex Drysdale

Chairman