



3 June 2014

Mr Kevin Ross
Chief Executive Officer
Wanganui District Council
PO Box 637
Wanganui 4540



Dear Kevin,

Submission on Proposed Plan Change 36 – Rural Zones

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on Proposed Plan Change 36 to Wanganui District Council's (Council) District Plan. The Wanganui Rural Community Board (Board) wish to be heard in support of this submission.

Background – Rural Directions: Wanganui Rural Community Board Strategic Plan 2014-2023

The Board is comprised of 11 members, seven of whom are directly elected by rural constituents with the remaining four comprised of two Councillors appointed by Council and two Youth Councillors from the Wanganui District Council Youth Committee.

Earlier this year the Board revised its 10 year strategic plan for 2014-2023 *Rural Directions*. *Rural Directions* has marked the Board as a leader in Community Boards across the country.

Rural Directions clearly sets out the Board's mission and vision for Wanganui's rural community, and sets out the six focus areas identified by the Board that will drive their projects going forward over the next few years. *Rural Directions* is a living document which is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis and is an indispensable continuous improvement tool for the Board as advocates for rural Wanganui. The Board recognises that the Wanganui rural sector is not a single community of interest; it is diverse on many levels – geographically, farming practices, lifestyle, culture, education and opportunities. Accordingly, as representatives of the rural community the Board takes into account and considers the multiplicity of community interests and diverse issues associated with each part of the rural community to ensure that as a whole the rural community is effectively represented and advocated on behalf of. Having both speaking and voting rights at Council's main Committee meetings, and speaking rights at Council meetings, ensures the voice of the rural community is heard at all levels of Council.

The Board values the support it gets from Council.

The Board punches well above its weight and has enjoyed a number of recent successes including winning at last year's New Zealand Community Board's national biennial conference both the Supreme Award for 'best practice' across all categories for the Board's work on rural broadband and also the top award within the leadership category for the Board's work on extending rural broadband coverage within the Wanganui district.

The Vision

Council's vision statement is *Family Friendly Wanganui: the best place to live in New Zealand*. The Board, along with Council, recognises the importance of being business friendly too. With that in mind, the Board's vision is that the Wanganui community is prosperous, connected and happy.

Focus Areas

1. Community partnerships
2. Rural economic growth
3. Infrastructure
4. Community wellbeing
5. Representation
6. Communication

Consultation

The Board is pleased with the level of consultation provided over Proposed District Plan Change 36 – Rural Zones. A series of meetings with rural communities was undertaken in 2012. These meetings addressed a range of rural issues including proposed changes to Phase 5 of Shaping Wanganui. In addition to the public meetings, a workshop was held for Board members. Council staff from the District Plan Review team supported and attended the workshop and all of the community meetings. In addition, they provided regular updates to the Board.

Public interest from the rural community has been high with the number of approaches to Board members far exceeding other key processes such as the Annual Plan and 10 Year Plan. The overwhelming feedback from the rural community has been in support of the proposed changes.

Objectives and policies

The Board supports the objectives and policies of the proposed plan changes in principle.

Minimum lot sizes for rural subdivision

The Board strongly supports the management and preservation of class 1 and class 2 soil resource, and the keeping of it for productive purposes.

The Board notes managing soil resource in this manner is consistent with the principles of the Rural Enterprise Project.

The Rural Enterprise Project promotes the intensification of high-value food production using Wanganui's best soils and climatic regime. The objective is to significantly lift Wanganui's income from exports to the world's emerging and discerning markets. This food will carry the

selling points of having been grown in a soil-based (natural) clean environment and be measurably 'safe' – the principal point of difference from our competition. To demonstrate the potential here, if just 25% of our best soils were eventually put to this use and delivered the easily achievable tenfold return of livestock farming, Wanganui's GDP would increase by \$1 billion net present value, or near 50%. The value is not only confined to exportable product and thus imported dollars, but will also manifest itself in employment in food processing, transport, buildings, and management services.

Reverse sensitivity

The Board is concerned about the issue of reverse sensitivity and notes this is exacerbated with an increase in life-stylers moving into the rural zone. The Board encourages Council to implement policies that support reverse sensitivity. The Board also asks that Council work in a positive and supportive way with specific farms within the rural sector when the issue of reverse sensitivity is raised. This is specifically so with intensive agricultural production.

Notwithstanding this, the Board acknowledges the efforts already made to mitigate reverse sensitivity through the design of the Rural A zone.

Effect of forestry on rural roads

Damage to rural roads as a result of increased forestry activity can be mitigated in the future through a number of methods, including local, regional and national arrangements. The Board would like Council to consider building this issue, and the management of which, into the District Plan for future management and mitigation of damage to rural roads.

The Board thanks the District Plan Review team for their support and advice to both the Board and the rural community over the Proposed Plan Change 36 – Rural Zones.

Yours sincerely



Alan Taylor
Chair
Wanganui Rural Community Board

