

MDC Climate Change Sub-committee presentation – 30/01/2024.

Introduction.

Climate Karanga Marlborough appreciates the opportunity to be present and contribute at this inaugural meeting of the Climate Change Subcommittee. You have asked us for an overview of CKM, which we are happy to provide.

You will be familiar with some of our faces but CKM is a wide and growing regional network of about 140 highly skilled individuals from a diversity of backgrounds – education, health, viticulture, farming, engineering, energy... We are also artists, builders, lifestyle block owners, and most importantly parents and grandparents held together by a value system that says we need to look after our world to ensure that those who come after us can still have a good life. Members of CKM take part on local pest management and biodiversity projects, produce articles for local and national consumption and write submissions to government, the Climate Commission and Council. We believe that we cannot have healthy, meaningful lives without a healthy natural environment around us. We are part of nature and nature is part of us.

We congratulate the Sub-Committee on bringing in voices from the Marlborough community from the outset of its working and hope proactive community engagement will be a key component of its function. What is of prime interest to us is to understand what the Sub-Committee's purpose is and what the thoughts of the committee members are about this purpose. It is not at all clear to us at this point. Is it focused only on reducing Council's carbon emissions and improving their resilience, or is its role to have a wider view of what the whole region needs to do? Are you responsible for establishing and leading the Climate Forum referred to in the Climate Action Plan?

We want to be upfront with you and say our hopes for this committee are that it takes a leading role and responsibility within the Council structure and within the wider Marlborough community. That it will show bravery and be an impassioned voice not only on the threats we all face due to global heating but also on other related threats such as ocean acidification and the overall integrity of the biosphere. We are very concerned for the myriad other lifeforms that share this amazing planet. They have the right to live on a planet with a biosphere that can continue to support all of them.

We are aware that the Climate Change Working Group comprising staff from across Council, is tasked with championing implementation of the Climate Action Plan. Does this include keeping you up to date with recent climate information? Are you exposed to information from the wider environmental science world regarding the various global challenges that are and will increasingly impact us here in Marlborough? We are keen to find out from you what sort of information is shared with you by the Staff Working Group? We hope that this committee's role is not just to receive reports such as the ones tabled today. Of course it is necessary that implementation of the Climate Action Plan is documented and this and the Emissions Inventory are important aspects of the Council meeting its responsibilities but these reports could just as easily be received by the Environment and Planning Committee as they have in the past.

We note in the Climate Action Plan that one of the “*focus areas*” is - “*Decisions of Council consider the implications of climate change for current and future generations.*”

In due course, we hope to share some of our ideas on where and how the Council can take a lead with this focus in mind.

Our key concerns.

The large increase in global catastrophes and extreme events during 2023 have been shocking, and even experts who have been working for years on the climate crisis did not expect the magnitude of changes.

See <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/jan/09/2023-record-world-hottest-climate-fossil-fuel>

1. We are exceeding 6 out of the 9 planetary boundaries as defined by the Stockholm Resilience Centre. To quote from two authors of their 2023 update assessing planetary resilience.

“We don’t know how long we can keep transgressing these key boundaries before combined pressures lead to irreversible change and harm.” Johan Rockström.

“Earth is a living planet, so the consequences are impossible to predict.” Sarah Cornell.

See <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2023-09-13-all-planetary-boundaries-mapped-out-for-the-first-time-six-of-nine-crossed.html> AND <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html> for further info.

2. Global Heating is only a symptom of a much bigger dilemma facing humanity: that is our diseased relationship with Planet Earth. We wish to point out there is a big difference between a problem and a dilemma. Calling global heating a problem suggests there are solutions that can fix it.
3. We must find ways to reduce our energy use. The concept of **energy descent** needs to be better understood. It is our excessive energy use that is the main reason we are exceeding planetary boundaries.
4. We can't simply replace fossil fuels with **renewable energy** and expect to carry on our current high energy lifestyles. Mother Nature cannot continue to provide us with all the resources we require to do that and cannot continue to absorb the levels of **waste** that arise from it.
5. Issues such as ocean heating and ocean acidification are not something that have just appeared in the last couple of decades. It has taken us many decades to reach this point and the inertia of this process is so big that it will take many decades to stop the heating and acidification and to help Nature to turn it around. With the oceans absorbing 93% of the excess heat caused by GHG emissions and 30% of the CO2 **we have to plan and prepare for things to get worse before they get better.** The marine heatwaves highlighted in the November report to Council were not rare, unexpected events but rather inevitable consequences of our way of living on planet Earth.
6. We are dealing with a long-term and ongoing predicament, not a series of problems for which all we have to do is find a series of more or less technological fixes.

The lack of central direction.

We understand that Councils throughout the country are faced with the awkward situation of having to deal with the impacts of climate crises while still waiting for guidelines from central government regarding roles and responsibilities and resource allocations.

We note that LGNZ openly regrets the lack of leadership from central government and calls on them to take up the reins of leadership regarding climate change and adaptation to change. We think such calls are in vain. - Internationally and nationally governments have shown themselves too much beholden financially and otherwise to industry lobbies and large companies, who depend on fossil fuel consumption (successive IPCC COPs conferences have demonstrated that.) We believe leadership is going to come from grass roots, and that is what the Council and its committees including this sub-committee should be fostering.

Leadership from the Sub-Committee.

Our hope is that the Sub-committee serves as a catalyst within Council to ensure the requisite leadership is adopted with bravery. An important aspect of the role of a committee such as this one should be to keep abreast of the implications of planetary limits being exceeded.

In that regard, we encourage this committee, with the support of MDC, to take a long-term view of its activity, knowing that we all have to put our long-term hats on and work towards not only adaptation but still also mitigation.

Conclusion.

We would like to finish with the following quote from [Barry Commoner](#) which is just as relevant today as when he wrote it in 1971. In his book *The Closing Circle*, he said: *“We are in an environmental crisis because the means by which we use the ecosphere to produce wealth are destructive of the ecosphere itself. The present system of production is self-destructive; the present course of human civilisation is suicidal.”*

Commoner is best known for his four “laws of ecology”, which he outlined in the first chapter of *The Closing Circle*.

These are:

- **Everything is connected to everything else** - There is one ecosphere for all living organisms and what affects one, affects all.
- **Everything must go somewhere** - There is no “waste” in nature and there is no “away” to which things can be thrown.
- **Nature knows best** - Humankind has fashioned technology to improve upon nature, but such change in a natural system is likely to be detrimental to that system.
- **There is no such thing as a free lunch** - Exploitation of nature will inevitably involve the conversion from useful to useless forms.