

## MARLBOROUGH AIRPORT “A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE” SURVEY.

This response is from Climate Karanga Marlborough. Our group currently has 138 members, the big majority of which are Marlborough residents.

Q5 - Infrastructure investment - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Infrastructure investment refers to focusing on core assets (eg forward planning for upgrades), as well as planning for new commercial ventures at the airport.

*We're generally not supportive of infrastructure investment. The recent upgrades to the terminal and parking are very adequate for the foreseeable future. Air travel will become more expensive, as an increasing movement toward emissions controls requires more expensive sustainable aircraft fuel (SAF) and/or new electric aircraft with initially low passenger capacity. The one area that will require new infrastructure will be in charging capacity for electric aircraft, when they become available. Our overall aim must be to discourage people from flying whenever possible. People should be encouraged to use lower carbon modes of transport.*

Q 6 - Energy security - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Energy security refers to adequate infrastructure for emerging energy sources and technologies, and an uninterrupted fuel or energy source for existing technology.

*We need to introduce a program of energy descent in NZ (and globally). Energy descent is a process whereby a society either voluntarily or involuntarily reduces its total energy consumption. MAL directors need to make the effort to fully understand the multiple threats facing life on Planet Earth. There is little point in gazing at our navels with exercises such as this survey if we avoid facing up to the big picture issues. We are being overtaken by the major planetary changes that are already happening due to global heating, ecosystems collapse and military conflicts. We have to be much more proactive and aware. We are exceeding 6 out of the 9 planetary boundaries as defined by the Stockholm Resilience Centre. (Please see attached comments document for additional info) It is our excessive energy use that is the main reason we are exceeding planetary boundaries. We cannot assume "uninterrupted fuel or energy sources" will continue to be available in the future. In fact we should plan for interrupted fuel and energy supplies.*

Q 7 - Biodiversity - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Biodiversity refers to identifying, managing and reporting the airport's impact on biodiversity through business operations.

*The airport's operations on their own don't have a large impact on biodiversity, but we wish to reiterate. We can't just focus on MAL and it's operations. We must look at the implications of being a cog in the global air travel industry and identify ways to discourage people from flying. Healthy functioning ecosystems support vibrant biodiversity. This is all that matters in the end. This is far more important than uninterrupted fuel supplies for instance. We have to reorder our priorities. Without vibrant biodiversity life on Planet Earth collapses. Of course any possible opportunity to improve the airport's impact locally on biodiversity should be taken but the directors of MAL need to study and understand the existential threats facing all life on our amazing planet due to the multiple threats to our life support systems as referred to in our previous answer.*

Q 8. Diversifying core airport revenue - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Diversifying core airport revenue refers to reducing economic risk for business longevity; understanding opportunities for access to new markets (eg logistical and cold storage capability; solar farm; business park).

*MAL provides a valuable facility to the Marlborough community and should not diversity into other revenue-making schemes. They should stick to what they know and not go into risky side-ventures. All new business ventures come with risk and we Marlborough rate-payers don't want council companies taking on more risk.*

Q 9. Airport user experience - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Airport user experience refers to contributing to the Marlborough visitor experience and the look/feel authentically reflects our local people, communities and industries; MAL actively keeps a pulse on consumer preferences for end-to-end experience (eg ground transport options, maintaining quick access to passenger flights).

*Our answer to this question is subject to our previous comments regarding the need to discourage people from flying. We accept that there are legitimate and important reasons to fly but the current focus must be reversed. It needs to be the last resort option. We cringe every time we hear people talking as if it is a good thing that tourism numbers are increasing both in NZ and globally. We can't encourage global tourism and reduce emissions at the same time. This is an oxymoron.*

Q 10. Corporate governance - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Corporate governance refers to a structure that supports organisational goals and MAL's purpose, which is articulated and communicated; and systems to ensure sustainability-related activities are progressed with accountability.

*What is this "sustainability" that is referenced in this question? The sustainability that needs to be ensured is the sustainability of the planetary life support systems. Without this there can be no long term sustainability of the airports activities or anything else. No operation can be economically sustainable whilst we continue to have a climate and biodiversity crisis. So with this fact as our guideline we support "sustainability-related activities being progressed with accountability", if they are clearly defined.*

Q 11. Resilient supply chain - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Resilient supply chain refers to active supply chain management, including local and ethical procurement; mitigating supply risk in procurement (eg conflict minerals, labour issues).

*We expect MAL to act ethically with Marlborough's interests as a first priority. MAL should identify all possible ways to reduce it's material and energy use. It should actively manage its supply chain with this aim being paramount. A measure of success will be when flights through the airport are reduced because of reduced demand.*

Q 13. Sustainability reporting - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Sustainability reporting refers to having an environmental strategy or indicators; and reporting these to the board and public. It includes risk identification, such as climate-related risks.

*We fully agree with the need for sustainability reporting. All businesses should be required to measure the impacts of their activities. In MAL's case fully understanding those impacts means realising that our airport is part of a global aviation industry that is currently encouraging people to fly as much as they want. We need to find ways to counter this by educating Marlborough people on the need to only fly when really necessary. The climate-related risks you refer to are very real and growing. It has taken many, many decades of human activities to result in the impacts we are now experiencing with rapidly climbing ocean and atmospheric temperatures etc.*

Q 14 - Circular economy and waste - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Circular economy and waste refers to actively reducing waste in airport's own operations, and working with airport partners to reduce and dispose of waste in a responsible manner to divert from landfill (eg reuse, recycle).

*This topic has to be of primary importance for the reasons outlined in our previous answers. All businesses should be educating themselves about how they can participate effectively in a circular economy if they wish their businesses to continue to be viable. Heads in the sand will definitely mean failure. We need eyes wide open!*

Q 15. Sustainable financial performance - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Sustainable financial performance refers to ensuring MAL is not reliant on ratepayers to subsidise airport operations; MAL maintains financial sustainability and viability as a 100% council-controlled organisation.

*We do not think it is critical that the airport be self-sustaining. Forcing it to be so presents the risk that it might de-prioritise its core business in favour of income generating activities. The airport exists as a service to Marlborough residents; if it needs to be subsidised at certain times, so be it. Ideally it should aim to cover its costs but the prime focus should be on providing a service in the true sense of the word rather than making a profit. Marlborough flyers need to understand that flying is a privilege with environmental and climate related costs that have to be borne by all of us.*

Q 16. Innovation - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Innovation refers to taking calculated risks to partner with innovators, trialing new ideas and more sustainable/greener options for business operations and major projects (eg test site for new aircraft; construction materials for reseals).

***IF** these activities are purely to reduce emissions and become “greener”, innovations with embedded risks might be worth taking. In most instances, however, we believe the airport should facilitate businesses taking the risks, while providing in-kind support and sticking to its core business.*

Q 17. Iwi partnership - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Iwi partnership refers to tangible and genuine acknowledgement of tangata whenua; respecting the cultural significance of the airport to local iwi (site specific, gateway to the region, connecting to whanau).

*Every business, public or private, needs to acknowledge tangata whenua. This should be BAU for New Zealand enterprises.*

18. Compliance and regulation - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Compliance and regulation refers to planning and staying ahead of environmental legislation and standards; aiming to operate above minimum environmental standards required.

*Every business or enterprise in New Zealand needs to follow compliance. The penalties for not doing so, in terms of court ordered monetary damages and reputational damage, are too great to warrant the risk. We all need to follow the law.*

*MAL should be aiming high and setting itself the goal of operating well above minimum environmental standards. In fact the goal should be to operate at the highest possible standards.*

19. Decarbonisation - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Decarbonisation refers to reducing carbon emissions. This includes supporting and enabling tenants and airport users with emissions reductions; energy efficiency and reductions in own operations; and/or pursuit of renewable energy on-site.

*As a local government enterprise, who must share the District Council's goals in decarbonisation and hopefully set an example to other enterprises in Marlborough, this is a high priority issue. Every New Zealand business and government enterprise needs to do what they can to reduce emissions. More in the attached Comments document.*

20. Health and safety - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Health and safety refers to meeting expectations for aviation safety requirements (e.g. bird strikes), as well as providing a safe and healthy space for all airport users.

*This is a high priority for all New Zealand businesses and government enterprises. It should never be compromised for the sake of cost savings. The reputational damage to the airport from failures in health and safety are too great, as is the personal damage for those impacted. Effective health and safety management is everyone's responsibility, and especially those in local and central government agencies, who should lead by example.*

21. Integrated approaches (Marlborough District Council) - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Integrated approaches (Marlborough District Council) refers to working closer with Council and its related entities on aligned sustainability goals; and developing aligned standards and expectations (e.g. integrated reporting with Council; conditions of funding or procurement tied to sustainability).

*In that MAL is owned by MDC, it goes without saying that the two agencies should have aligned sustainability goals and standards. See comments document for more on emissions reporting.*

22. Water management - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Water management refers to effective and sustainable use and discharge of water, including associated infrastructure (eg stormwater filtration).

*This should be BAU, normal operating procedure. Water is a critical resource in Marlborough. No one should waste it or compromise its quality.*

23. Collaboration - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Collaboration refers to fostering partnerships across the NZ aviation industry to progress sustainability objectives, and collaborating with the local community and partners to achieve shared outcomes (eg solar farm).

*Where and when it is appropriate to collaborate with other businesses and agencies, but does not compromise the safety and financial security of the airport, these things might be considered. We support a solar farm being established if suitable land is available, especially with Marlborough likely to be one of the first airports to have regular flights by electric planes. That said the most important collaboration needs to be with the community to raise awareness of the need for everyone to limit flying whenever possible. Humanity is in Overshoot and bringing the critical life support systems of our planet back into some balance must be the focus and prime aim of all of our actions. See attached Comments document for more info.*

24. Community engagement and communication - From your perspective, how important should this topic be to MAL?

Community engagement and communication refers to engaging with and supporting the local communities. Communication is genuine, easy to find, and timely. This includes 'walking the talk' around MAL's pillars of people, planet and prosperity.

*We place high priority on this goal. "Walking the talk" is the only way to show those who use your service that you take your role seriously as a service provider. That the needs of the people you serve are paramount. We sincerely hope that the pillar you have identified of "prosperity" is a prosperity that is all encompassing and not just financial prosperity. As you have gathered from our answers we believe there is only one way to true prosperity and that is by putting the needs of the environment first in all circumstances.*

## **Comments on Marlborough Airport “A Sustainable Future” survey.**

The Marlborough Airport provides a service to Marlborough residents and businesses and should not think of itself as a money-making enterprise. Planning for the airport’s future needs to seriously consider the impacts of global heating and industrial trends toward decarbonisation world-wide. We all know we have to reduce fossil fuel use and it’s associated GHG emissions urgently. We expect that a time will come when the social licence for indiscriminate flying will be eroded as the general public are subjected to more and more extreme climatic events. Alternatives to fossil fuels will also be expensive and potentially in short supply (i.e., sustainable aircraft fuel). The airport should not blindly assume that business and tourism growth will fuel greater needs for air travel and therefore, airport expansion.

### **Global risks to air travel industry.**

There are a range of concerns we would like to add regarding the risks of future global warming and climate mitigation action to the air travel industry:

- Increasingly inclement and unpredictable weather will make air travel trickier. People will increasingly look for more reliable modes of travel.
- Air travel is destined to become more expensive due to the increased cost of SAF (sustainable aviation fuel – probably mostly from biofuel) relative to fossil fuels. International travel has gotten a “pass” so far, but this can’t last. A recent analysis suggested that SAF is about twice the price of fossil kerosene.
- There will be growing political pressure not to devote farmland to growing crops for SAF. With much of the world already suffering from hunger, crop failures due to accelerating global warming will make this worse. Where there is a trade-off between feeding people and bringing in tourists, the tourism industry will lose. We therefore do not support widespread conversion from fossil to SAF fuels. The solution is to fly less as we have said elsewhere in this survey. All biofuel usage, aviation and otherwise, places more stress and demand on our natural world and commands land that should be growing food. We don’t want demand for SAF resulting in higher land prices and hence higher food prices for the world’s hungry.
- Even with SAF, nearly half the warming due to long to medium distance air travel is due to changes to the stratosphere, where these planes fly, and not from exhaust CO<sub>2</sub>. Water is rare in the stratosphere and aircraft contrails add a lot. And, water is an intense greenhouse gas. At the same time, stratospheric clouds tend to bottle more heat into the atmosphere than reflect incoming solar radiation back to space. Burning anything to keep airplanes flying in the stratosphere is essentially unsustainable in a warming world. We understand that planes flying out of Marlborough are primarily short distance flights but many people are taking connections to or from long distance flights. We want to discourage long distance air travel and particularly air tourism. It is not in our collective interest to encourage this highly damaging activity during a climate emergency.

### **Planetary Boundaries.**

[Scientists have identified 9 critical boundaries](#) that our human civilisation needs to stay within if we wish to retain a liveable planet. At this point in time we have exceeded 6 of the 9 boundaries. Three of them cover what we take from the ecological system. They are loss of biodiversity (extinction of species), loss of fresh water (pumping too much water from rivers and aquifers) and land use (deforestation).

The remaining six boundaries concern the waste our activity adds, to what would have occurred naturally. They are: greenhouse gases which cause climate change; ocean acidification (carbon absorbed by the sea); emission of chemicals that deplete the Earth's ozone layer; "novel entities" (synthetic chemicals such as plastics, DDT and concrete); aerosols; and nutrient overload (nitrogen and phosphorus from fertilisers that wash into rivers and the sea, causing algae blooms, killing fish and coral).

Crossing any of these boundaries doesn't trigger immediate disaster. But it does mean we've moved from the safe zone into dangerous territory. And the nine boundaries are interrelated and interacting, in ways we don't yet fully understand. In 2009, the scientists found we'd already crossed three boundaries: biodiversity, climate change and nutrient overload. By the 2015 update, a fourth boundary had been crossed: land use. And by this year's update, only three boundaries hadn't been crossed: ocean acidification (but only just), aerosol pollution, and stratospheric ozone depletion – where an international agreement banning CFCs is slowly reducing the ozone hole we created.

There are a range of ways of assessing what humanity's impact on the biosphere is but there is general agreement that we are currently using about 1.8 times more than the planet can regenerate. This is known as **OVERSHOOT**, which we have been in since the 1970's. ([More info](#)) Again this can only end badly if we continue with our heads in the sand thinking we are so smart that our technology will solve these existential problems. We can't continue with the current dominant economic growth model on a planet with finite resources. We should always be motivated by environmental imperatives before economic ones.

### **More on Climate-related risks referred to in Question 13.**

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, 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 CO<sub>2</sub> we have to plan and prepare for things to get worse before they get better. This means risks for MAL. You need to be informed and aware of what is happening globally if you are to be truly prepared to manage climate and environmental risks. For instance, the 2022 and 2023 marine heatwaves (highlighted in [the November report to MDC](#)) were not rare, unexpected events but rather inevitable consequences of our way of living on planet Earth.

### **Decarbonisation.**

The direct Scope 1 carbon impact of MAL's operations will be very small, as we understand most of the services such as fuel supply and emergency response are provided by other organisations such as Air BP and the Airforce. Clearly the biggest carbon impact is from flying airplanes and again that impact will be borne by the relevant airline companies. So we reiterate, what MAL can do is discourage people from flying whenever possible and put pressure on all Scope 2 & 3 businesses that they deal with, to decarbonise.

### **Predicament or Problem?**

We would like to conclude with an observation regarding the challenges facing us all on our beautiful, life giving planet.

We are all collectively faced with a major predicament where continued BAU is suicidal but we are inclined to tinker around the edges rather than face the magnitude of the challenge. This is a perfectly understandable human response because the magnitude of the changes we all need to make in our lives is so great. We wish to make the point that a predicament is very different from a

series of problems, which is what most people think is all we have to deal with. Problems are issues where we can generally find solutions, whereas a predicament is something that is much more difficult to resolve and sometimes we have to adjust and adapt to it rather than solve it.

This definition may help to clarify our point.

Predicament - an unpleasant or confusing situation that is difficult to get out of or solve. The words predicament, dilemma, plight, quandary refer to unpleasant or puzzling situations. Predicament and plight stress more the unpleasant nature, quandary and dilemma the puzzling nature of the situation.

Thanks for the opportunity to contribute to your survey.

Budyong Hill – on behalf of CKM.