

# Foundation North feedback on Auckland Council pre-consultation

Let's protect our environment

December 2024



## Foundation North

Foundation North (FN) was established in 1988 as one of twelve regional community trusts. Our purpose is to enhance lives through responsible guardianship of our investments and focused funding, anchored by our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The value of Foundation North's funds under management on 31 March 2024 was over \$1.76 billion, with over \$1.3 billion returned in grants since our inception to not-for-profit initiatives in Tāmaki Makaurau and Te Tai Tokerau. Last year \$51.5m was provided to 730 community organisations, with \$41.7m for the Auckland Region.

## Commitment to Te Taiao

Our interest in this pre-consultation is driven by our communities, who are at the heart of everything we do. We are privileged to occupy an enabling role, with our funding and other support empowering community mahi and projects that make positive differences to our region, both now and for future generations.

Our strategic plan is our pathway to the achievement of our vision of enhanced lives. We are committed to increasing equity (Hāpai te ōritetanga); enhancing social inclusion (Whakauru mai); regenerating the

environment (Whakahou taiao) and enabling community support (Hāpori awahina) across our rohe.

A strategic refresh earlier this year further embedded our commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Climate Action into our overall strategy. To achieve our goals, we take a holistic approach to understanding the total system, not just parts of it, working in partnership with grantees and other funders to achieve projects of greater scale and impact in our region.

Of relevance is our Whakahou Taiao – Regenerative Environment focus area that supports joined-up approaches to conserving, restoring, and renewing the environment so that Te Taiao and people can flourish together. This work is influenced and motivated by our five-year, \$12m Gulf Innovation Fund Together (GIFT) initiative that ran until 2022.

As a founding signatory to the Funders' Commitment on Climate Action, we join with other funders across Aotearoa to accelerate effective and collaborative climate responses, including responsibly investing in a tika transition to a low-carbon society. This year, Climate Action Aotearoa and the Combined Community Trusts of Aotearoa (of which FN is one) contributed \$600,000 to a collaborative Kaupapa of National Significance climate action fund to boost community resilience to a changing climate and empower national-scale climate initiatives.

## Investment & Insights

Over the last 5 years the scale of our investment in our Regenerative Environment and Climate Action focus areas for the Auckland Region has been significant - \$36.8m across 215 grants. This investment has increased year on year as the crucial role of Te Taiao becomes understood.

Along with environmental outcomes, this investment has provided key learnings and insights, for example:

- successful landscape-scale approaches include those that are Tangata Whenua-led, mountains to sea approaches that value and implement Mātauranga Māori,
- effective and enabling support and advocacy includes convening networks of common interest, leading from behind to amplify community voices and action for systems change.

We have also witnessed the power of kotahitanga (togetherness) when working in partnering ways with Tangata Whenua, other community stakeholders, and with other funders, including local and central government.

Foundation North has already partnered and/or co-funded with Auckland Council – for example the Hauraki Gulf Forum, Aktive, Tū Mai Taonga, Revive Our Gulf, Te Korowai o Waiheke, Waiheke Marine Project, the Kai Innovators Incubator, Oranga Decides & Roskill Decides participatory grantmaking initiatives and many others.

We bring these experiences and insights to the following submission.

## Foundation North submission on the pre-consultation – in general

We are encouraged that Auckland Council wishes to update its plan to protect the natural environment in 2030. We also tautoko the timeliness of highlighting the changes that are occurring due to introduced species, climate change and population growth and diversity.

For the public to have a say early in this process is pleasing. Foundation North is

keen to contribute now and, in the future, the collective goal of protecting the environment.

### Our recommendations for Auckland Council to consider on the way to 2030 include:

- keep communities at the centre, and actively listen to where they want to be in five years and beyond: Foundation North will do its part to commit support to enable our communities/grantees to co-design this Plan with Auckland Council
- support the agency of those with lived experience: recognise that community-led solutions work because this is where grass-roots observations happen, where cause and effect play out every day. It is also where a deeper relationship between people and te taiao is felt and where truly regenerative environmental systems and practices can be activated from and embedded
- help communities to collaboratively identify, coordinate, resource and build capacity within themselves to improve climate outcomes and resilience
- continue to learn about the strong link between Te Tiriti o Waitangi and climate action: commit to the spirit of partnership with Iwi/hapū Māori to address the causes and impacts of climate change, and seek to enable Māori aspirations through respecting whakapapa, Tino Rangatiratanga, rite tahi (equity) and kaitiakitanga.

## Foundation North submission on the pre-consultation – specific topics

### Options for cat management to protect threatened native wildlife

As previously noted, FN supports grantees working to protect and regenerate wildlife, often in highly valuable ecosystems that are vulnerable to predation by cats. Thus, FN is fully supportive of supporting responsible cat ownership through education and encouraging owners to try new measures that keep their cats happy and safe.

The option to provide financial support to assist people who cannot afford to desex their cats is sound and equitable. FN preference is for education as an approach rather than rules for mainland Auckland. With the more vulnerable island ecosystem of Aotea/ Great Barrier, FN supports the wisdom of Tū Mai Taonga for mandatory desexing of all owned cats on the island and only island residents being allowed to transport cats to Aotea. Mandatory rules are necessary for the most vulnerable situations and it is FN's responsibility to support their grantees local knowledge that such a mandatory approach is warranted.

### Achieving pest-free islands and peninsulas in the Auckland region and contributing to a predator-free New Zealand by 2050

FN has and continues to fund efforts to be predator free across Tāmaki Makaurau region as well as encouraging these efforts to track their learning so that the entire country

can reach the Predator-Free goal by 2050. Specifically, FN funds Te Korowai o Waiheke (in partnership with Auckland Council) and Tū Mai Taonga with their predator-free effort.

FN feedback for Auckland Council is to partner in intentional convening of those involved in predator-free efforts across the region, so that the collective knowledge may get us closer to the 2050 goal, quicker. Proactive knowledge sharing through open-source databases, secondment of positions and plenty of narrative sharing will contribute to the joint goal.

Auckland Council has a broad reach with your communications and FN would encourage you to bring the world of the islands into the homes of those on the mainland, so that people might better understand the value of islands and support changes to protect the islands better.

### Managing caulerpa seaweed and other harmful marine species

FN is acutely aware of the threat posed by exotic caulerpa and other harmful marine species and has funded efforts by Ngāti Paoa Iwi Trust and the Waiheke Marine Project in marine monitoring and innovative treatment of exotic caulerpa. FN is aware and supportive of Auckland Council also funding the Waiheke Marine Project to continue its effective marine monitoring programme. FN supports a continuation of funding allocation that will enable mana whenua and local communities to respond at speed to newly identified invasive marine species.

Although FN agrees that anchors, chains and other gear need to be clean of visible dirt, seaweed and animals; to reduce spread of unwanted marine species, FN prefers the use of education and not rules to raise awareness and change behaviour.

FN fully supports the proposal to identify high value marine ecosystem locations and control a range of invasive marine species at these sites. The experience of the FN five-year GIFT programme highlighted the critical importance of the marine ecosystem for Tāmaki Makaurau and indeed for the whole country and world. It is high time that equal funding be allocated to the care and protection and regeneration of the marine environment. Starting with a priority on high value marine ecosystem locations is a sensible option.

FN emphasises however that discussions and decisions on what constitutes ‘high value marine ecosystem’ must be guided by mana whenua and mātauranga Māori. FN experiences with their grantees has taught us that all knowledge systems must be harnessed to make smart decisions that benefit te taiao and ngā tangata over the long term.

## **Reducing the spread and impact of harmful freshwater species like freshwater gold clam**

In general, FN supports Auckland Council to control freshwater pests at all of the region’s 72 lakes, including options to ban motorised boats on Lake Tomarata. Importantly FN recommends that Auckland Council be guided by Ngāti Manuhiri in all decisions of management of the taonga that is Lake Tomarata. Decisions on ‘right balance’ are best made in partnership with those who have whakapapa connections to the land and water.

## **Addressing the impact of climate change on our natural environment**

FN is deeply committed to climate action and strongly supports Auckland Council to make

tackling climate resilience a top priority when managing human behaviour in our natural environment. The challenges of climate change are urgent, with evidence of this happening on an increasing frequency and severity.

FN grantees have clearly communicated their need for support in climate action, thus FN implores Auckland Council to fully implement Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri: Auckland’s Climate Plan and collaborate with others, like FN, to support all Aucklanders to be climate change resilient.

FN has been submitting for some time on the importance of climate action. Some key takeaways from FN previous submissions that are pertinent to Auckland Council tackling climate resilience include:

- Taking a holistic perspective and collaborative effort with a whole of government approach.
- Being guided by Mātauranga Māori and taking a bicultural approach that is genuine, active and enduring.
- Finding equitable, inclusive and innovative ways to support communities on the frontlines of climate change.
- Raising the priority of marine ecosystems (as said earlier in this submission) that are so crucial to the Tāmaki Makaurau region.

## **Summary**

Foundation North welcomes this intentional and timely pre-consultation process to raise the importance of protecting the environment of Tāmaki Makaurau. As we have highlighted in our submission, FN is deeply committed to working in partnership with Tangata Whenua and in collaboration with the communities who know their environments best. We encourage Auckland Council to make the most of the five-year

period before the next plan is approved to:

- forge strong relationships with those at place, being guided by their knowledge
- collaborate on ways to protect the environment with the support of innovative funding practices
- take an open approach to data sharing so full information is available to all
- lastly and most importantly, be guided by Tangata Whenua in decision-making.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit on the pre-consultation process for Let's Protect our Environment. We do wish to speak to our submission and look forward to working more with Auckland Council over the next five years in reviewing and then approving the 2030 Plan.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Tynan', with a stylized flourish extending upwards and to the right.

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