

Origins of the Christchurch City Council Sustainability Policy

Why a Sustainability Policy?

- **For clarity and consistency.** The Council's Sustainability Policy seeks to clarify what the City Council means by the term "sustainability". This will enable Council policies and strategies to adopt a consistent point of reference. Allowing the related concepts and principles to be incorporated with more consistency and effectiveness into Council activities and decision making.
- **To have Council-wide effect.** Over arching policy frameworks, such as the Sustainability Policy, can be given effect through all Council strategies, plans and actions and can be used to test and evaluate current and future Council actions.
- **Flexibility.** The Sustainability Policy is flexible by helping to set the broad direction for Council, rather than prescribing solutions. The Council is able to weigh up various options using the Policy as a guide or a compass. It also allows the Council to knowingly and consciously make decisions that are not consistent with the Policy, to balance other priorities.
- **To be an exemplar organisation.** The Sustainability Policy helps the Council provide leadership to the community and other organisations.
- **Its good for business.** There is a well documented business case for wanting to be a more sustainable organisation. A sustainable organisation is better able to:
 - Motivate and empower staff
 - Innovate and adapt
 - Attract and retain staff
 - Enhance stakeholder relationships
 - Reduce risks
 - Reduce costs
- **To help meet legal obligations.** The Sustainability Policy will help the Council meet its obligations under the Local Government Act 2002.

Legal obligations

It is the Local Government Act 2002 that defines the purpose of local government and describes how the Council should make certain decisions. Both the purpose and the decision making process within the Local Government Act contain strong elements of sustainability.

Section 10, Local Government Act 2002

The purpose of local government is:

- (a) to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and*
- (b) to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future.*

Part 6, Section 77, Local Government Act 2002

A local authority must in the course of its decision making consider all reasonably practicable options and... consider the benefits and costs of each option in terms of present and future social, economic, environmental and cultural well being of the district...

Because of this, the Local Government Act 2002 forms the legal basis of the Council's Sustainability Policy.

What is a Policy?

The Council defines a policy as:

"A statement of position on an ongoing or recurring matter, issue or problem that directs any response, future action, or inaction, based on an articulated logic or recognised principles and where the policy has been resolved by the Council, their approval must be obtained to significantly act outside the policy"

This means that any significant departure from the Sustainability Policy will need to be made clear to the Council and explanations given as to how and why the departure is required. This makes a Policy a powerful tool for decision making within the Council. It also provides flexibility for the Council, in that other matters or priorities can be considered alongside the policy imperatives.

The Policy is NOT intended to be a strategy which has an in depth analysis of current practices, detailed targets, actions and analysis of costs and benefits. Likewise, the Policy is NOT intended to restate the established Christchurch Community Outcomes (www.ccc.govt.nz/LTCCP/CommunityOutcomes/) or to restate the Council's Vision for Christchurch being a World Class Boutique City. Broadly speaking, these are WHAT we are trying to achieve. The Sustainability Policy will provide guidance on HOW we may achieve them.

Sustainability Concepts

The Sustainability Policy has its origins in the Natural Step and adheres to the four system conditions that are central to this internationally recognised sustainability framework (www.naturalstep.org.nz).

The concepts of being Efficient, Cyclic, Solar, Safe and Social are from Edwin Datschefski Bio-Thinking approach (www.biothinking.com). The Bio-thinking concepts are largely targeted at sustainable design and manufacturing, but since they are based on the Natural Step, equally apply to individuals, households, organisations and communities.

The concept of continual improvement and its various steps are central to Environmental Management Systems found worldwide. As an example, the steps can be found in the “Path to Sustainability Guide” supplied by the Council’s Target Sustainability Programme which assists businesses in becoming more sustainable (www.ccc.govt.nz/targetsustainability). Each of the steps identified in the continual improvement model are also consistent with the Council’s own decision making framework.

Fundamental principles for living on Planet Earth

Just as there are the laws of gravity and the laws of thermodynamics, there are other natural laws that relate to living on Planet Earth. These natural laws are based on the fact that the Earth is essentially a closed system, powered by the sun and that we have only one planet which must last us forever. The Earth has limits which we must live within. The Earth has been compared to a “lifeboat in space”, on which we must live and share with all the people, plants and animals - forever.

Based on this reality, the following 4 rules must be adhered to:

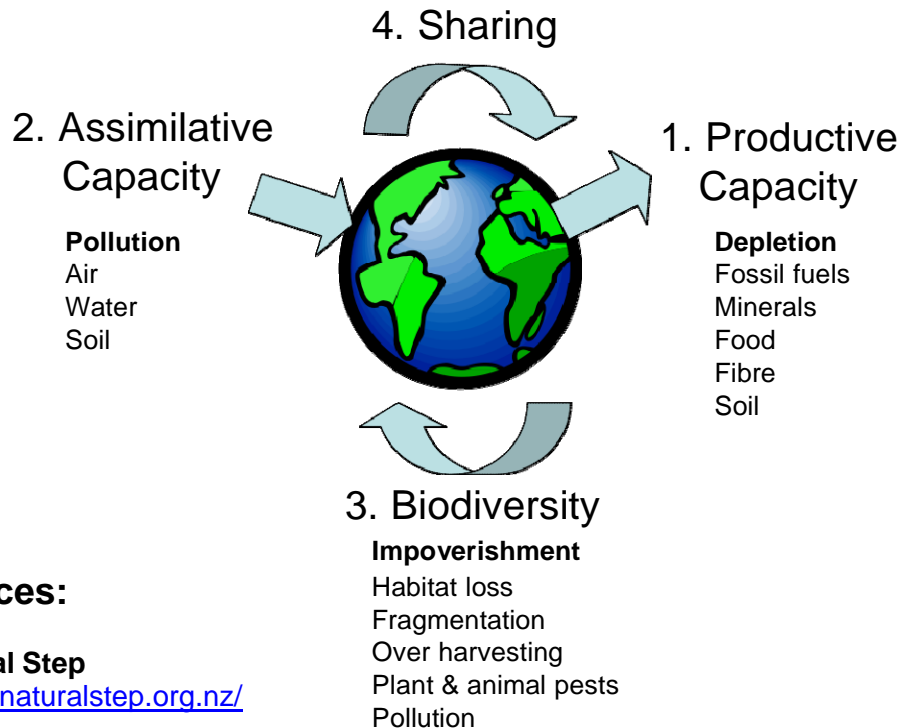
1. Depletion is not sustainable. The Earth has a limited and finite ability to produce things that we may need. If we consume things at a faster rate than the Earth can provide them, it will lead to depletion. Common examples of things depleted are of fossil fuels, minerals, over harvesting of fish and forests and soil degradation.

2. Pollution is not sustainable. The Earth has a limited and finite ability to absorb things that we may produce. If we produce things at a faster rate than the Earth can absorb, or produce things that the Earth can not easily break down, it will lead to pollution. Common examples are: a) the pollution of land with waste and litter; b) the pollution of the air with emissions, including greenhouse gases; and c) the pollution of water with sewage, detergents and fertilisers.

3. The degradation of ecosystems is not sustainable. We also share the Earth with a wondrous variety of plants and animals that have an inherent right to exist and thrive. But, we must also preserve this diversity for our own needs, because from this life we derive our food, fibre (e.g. clothing, building materials, paper), pharmaceuticals, our cultural heritage and identity, e.g. Silver Ferns, Kiwi, and our enjoyment of the outdoors and of nature. In addition, these ecosystems naturally purify our air and water and can recycle our wastes. Common threats to this diversity of life and healthy ecosystem functioning are habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, over harvesting, pollution, climate change and the introduction of plant and animal pests.

4. Selfishness is not sustainable. The world's resources must be fairly shared within and between generations to enable all people to have quality of life, now and forever. There are numerous examples where people do not have access to the basics of life including access to adequate food, fresh drinking water, sanitation and shelter. However meeting human needs goes well beyond ensuring people have enough to stay alive. It also includes things that make life worth living, such as the freedom to choose, to learn, to create and to love.

Human needs are well defined in the literature. Leading thinkers in this area are Manfred Max-Neef and Hartmut Bossel. Their frameworks for determining human needs have been amalgamated into the Council's Sustainability Policy. An example of how each of the human needs is expressed and how they can be satisfied, is provided in the table and references below.



References:

The Natural Step

<http://www.naturalstep.org.nz/>

Bio-Thinking

<http://www.biothinking.com/>

Continual Improvement

Path To Sustainability, Target Sustainability Programme

<http://www.target sustainability.co.nz/Download/>

Human Need

Max-Neef, Manfred, 1987. "Human Needs and Human Scale Development: an option for the future." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundamental_human_needs

Bossel, Hartmut, 2001. "Assessing viability and sustainability: a systems-based approach for deriving comprehensive indicators." Conservation Ecology 5(2): 12.

<http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol5/iss2/art12/>

John Peet, 2006. "Future Wellbeing: a sustainability stock take of New Zealand." A report for Sustainable Aotearoa New Zealand.

http://www.phase2.org/papers/sanz_stocktake_may_06.pdf

Manfred Max-Neef Classification of Fundamental Human Needs

Need	Being (qualities)	Having (things)	Doing (actions)	Interacting (settings)
subsistence	physical and mental health.	food, shelter, work.	feed, clothe, rest, work.	living environment, social setting.
Protection	care, adaptability, autonomy.	social security, health systems, work.	co-operate, plan, take care of, help.	social environment, dwelling.
affection	respect, sense of humour, generosity, sensuality.	friendships, family, relationships with nature.	share, take care of, make love, express emotions.	privacy, intimate spaces of togetherness.
understanding	critical capacity, curiosity, intuition.	literature, teachers, policies, educational.	analyse, study, meditate, investigate.	schools, families, universities, communities.
participation	receptiveness, dedication, sense of humour.	responsibilities, duties, work, rights.	cooperate, dissent, express opinions.	associations, parties, churches, neighbourhoods.
leisure	imagination, tranquillity, spontaneity.	games, parties, peace of mind.	day-dream, remember, relax, have fun.	landscapes, intimate spaces, places to be alone.
creation	imagination, boldness, inventiveness, curiosity.	abilities, skills, work, techniques.	invent, build, design, work, compose, interpret.	spaces for expression, workshops, audiences.
identity	sense of belonging, self-esteem, consistency.	language, religions, work, customs, values, norms.	get to know oneself, grow, commit oneself.	places one belongs to, everyday settings.
freedom	autonomy, passion, self-esteem, open-mindedness.	equal rights.	dissent, choose, run risks, develop awareness.	anywhere.