

## Greening the Red Zone



December 2018

**Thank you to Regenerate Christchurch for the work you have done, and the opportunity to comment on the Draft Ōtākaro-Avon River Corridor plan. The community's vision for the area has consistently been to restore our river, renature our city, provide thoughtful eco-recreation and small-scale, low impact business opportunities. We believe the draft largely supports this - a vital, healthy natural environment for the benefit of the city, its residents and visitors alike.**

**1. Overall** – it's a good plan with the health of the Ōtākaro-Avon at its heart, as it should be; lots of restored nature; respect for our pre-European heritage; and resilience in the face of climate change and future disasters. Thumbs up.

**2. Governance** - who is actually going to implement the plan? Without an overseeing body and a budget, the plan is just a piece of paper. Mentioned in Phase 1 as something that needs to happen before long-term works can begin, this is something that should have been already happening. Like the [Avon-Ōtākaro Network](#) and [Avon-Ōtākaro Forest Park](#), we support the call for an **independent trust** to oversee development. One that heavily involves community alongside CCC and iwi reps. We support the notion of consolidating it into **ONE TITLE** or it will become a fragmented hotch-potch. We understand governance structure was not part of RC's remit, but it is a conversation we should have had in tandem with RC's process. We need a land management plan for the whole of the OARC, with input from stakeholders and government agencies such as DOC, NIWA and Manaaki-whenua Landcare - a plan which includes a detailed pest management strategy. We are very concerned that council will be given the park and treat it as 'just another green space' as one council employee was quoted as saying. It is so much more than that.

**3. Climate and disaster resilience** - we can't impress enough how important it is to take future climate change and natural disasters into account. The red zone is a great gift in this respect. The east needs functional escape routes from the coast, responsible 3-waters management with **wetlands for green infrastructure** and **flood prevention**, thoughtful **stop-bank placement**, minimal, low impact built structures, etc. Any structures 'built' on this land will need to be able to be easily removed without huge public cost, including those damaged by future major earthquake or flood events. It is chiefly for this reason we have never endorsed the return of residents. However there are some innovative ways to be light on the landscape, and edge housing may in some areas be desirable; it is likely that cost, interference with current 'edge' housing, and insurance will factor into the type and number of houses allowed/required.

**4. Waterways** - we see a good commitment to cleaning up our waterways, returning mahinga kai, and preserving taonga sites like **Waikākāriki-Horseshoe Lake**. We love all the wetlands and stormwater management aspects of the plan, incorporating the restoration of Waikākāriki-Horseshoe

Lake. This rare landform known as an oxbow lake, is a remnant of an old meander of the Otakaro, and has huge cultural significance to local iwi. It is the last remaining patch of what covered Canterbury's Plains, just a couple of hundred years ago. It represents the fundamental vision of the park, and compromises on water quality improvement are not acceptable. Given that this has consistently been the most important factor for those who have engaged with the process – restoring our waterways to good health is non-negotiable. **Any project seeking space within the park should have either a positive or neutral impact on waterways, as well as on existing landforms such as the relict dunes in Avonside.**

**5. Greening from the bottom up** - all aspects of the park should be 'green' from construction materials to lighting. We want renewable energy and innovative green thinking. Natural materials for structures and signage. The park should be an immersive experience of nature. Plastic playgrounds and bright lights are jarring both to the eye and to the fundamentally 'green' vision.

**6. Connectivity** – the river embodies connectivity. A variety of walking and cycling paths, the landings, more footbridges, eco-attractions, are all ways to, as the plan says, **welcome people in**. Spending time in nature is proven to have major positive impacts on human health and wellbeing. And there must be **something for everyone** – children, teens, adults and seniors. Interpretation panels telling the story of both Maori and European settlement is an opportunity for Christchurch to become more connected to its history, and to each other. Some areas could preserve remnants of past neighbourhoods, such as the 'footprint' of a street layout, or plantings that show where a house used to be. Likewise, some of the few remaining examples of the power of the earthquakes should be preserved - such as examples where the road or land has dropped so people get an idea of what happened in these neighbourhoods – connecting us to memories and homes that were lost. We would like to see more footbridges at the eastern end, and we are concerned that the 'connection' currently stops at Pages Rd. Yes it's about **connecting people with each other and with nature**, but also importantly, **connecting the city to the sea**.

**7. Nature Play** – we are huge supporters of this concept. And we would like to be clear that it applies to **all ages**, not just children. Everyone wants to play (as we have seen with the all-ages use of Margaret Mahy), so when establishing play areas we also have to consider adults, seniors and especially teens. Areas for play should be **threaded throughout the park**, along with spaces for picnickers, and tranquility, bird-watching, river access etc. Use existing trees to make viewing towers/tree-forts along the way. And please no plastic playgrounds in the red zone. Let's keep it green and use natural resources for play equipment.

**8. Red Zone Dark Sky Park** - this is a project we fully endorse. With respect to lighting, only light spill and CPTED are mentioned in the plan. Sound environmental lighting requires much more thought than that. We have an opportunity to create a special experience for humans (who will be able to see up to 4 times as many stars in a dark sky red zone), and a safe dark sky habitat for our returning wildlife. Which, like all life - humans included – is hard-wired to that day/night, circadian rhythm. Build a 'star compass', and you have an **incredible attraction** too. Environmentally responsible lighting involves more than just reducing power use, and **dark skies are the new black**.

**9. Waitākiri Ecosanctuary** - despite a sanctuary being voted the **most popular attraction** in the previous consultation, the draft plan sites it as a 'long-term' goal; and there is even a question as to whether it should be fenced. An ecosanctuary without a fence will not allow us to add any of Canterbury's many vulnerable native species. We strongly support a sanctuary for its **halo effect**, for the many **endangered and unique species** it can nurture, and as a **prime attraction** in the red zone. Fencing and **building on Travis Wetland** means we have a 20-year head start – no need to wait. Instead of a large and costly Eden Project-style attraction, we support a **locally unique take on the living**

**laboratory.** It could be part of the ecosanctuary or/and within another part of the park (though not in the Green Spine unless very scaled down). Ecosanctuaries should be included in the permitted uses of the entire park - ultimately the whole OARC will be an urban ecosanctuary. As well as **research and citizen science facilities**, it could incorporate conference rooms, interactive learning displays, bird-watching balconies/towers/hides, a cafe with views of the sanctuary and the mountains etc. The cost of ZIP (Zero Invasive Predators) fencing would be under \$20 million - 10% of the Eden Project's projected costs. The fence would not be the only cost, but it is the main requirement for the re-establishment of vulnerable and ground-dwelling native species. Waitākiri Ecosanctuary would build **NZ's first 'landbridge' for wildlife**, crossing QEII Drive, and adjoin the excellent **Mahinga Kai Exemplar** running up Anzac Drive. We do not support 'edge' housing which currently appears to be sitting in the project's Bruwood footprint. The high ground there is vital for forest. **Travis Wetland currently gets 50,000 annual visits** – fencing it, increasing its biodiversity and conservation values, will only make it an even bigger attraction. We see this with sanctuaries in other cities. In fact every other major NZ city, except Christchurch. We support the call for **several ecosanctuaries** in Greater Christchurch/Banks Peninsula/Canterbury, but let's build on Travis and get started in the red zone.

**10. Pests & treasures** - we see no mention in the plan of how **pest plants and animals** might be dealt with. A **Pest Management Plan** tailored to the specific needs of regenerating habitat is required as soon as possible. One of our committee has put a lot of work into identifying invasive red zone plants/trees. Pest species need to be controlled/eradicated now (if not yesterday) before they become too dominant and expensive to remove. Also true **eco-sourcing of regional native plants** is needed to enhance our depleted local biodiversity. Local nurseries, and perhaps even co-ordinated groups of knowledgeable volunteers (e.g. Avon-Ōtākaro Forest Park), could already be nurturing them. It's about good groundwork - both these things should already be happening and cannot be afterthoughts. This all relates to Phase 1. We also noted in the draft plan that suggested species for various landscapes were sometimes at odds with what would be ecologically appropriate/viable.

**11. WhoW Aquasports Park** - in the draft plan, this appears to have been split into its constituent parts, a wave pool here, a kayak run there...this most certainly takes away some of the WhoW factor! It may also mean the free swimming pools are not included which would be a great shame. We believe this project delivers as a **whole attraction**, and has a **small enough eco-footprint** to be viable in the red zone. On a related note, in terms of watersports, we also fear supporters of the rejected lake idea will hold up the ongoing implementation process, potentially for years, and waste taxpayer money while they pursue legal challenges. Challenges we believe will not change the ultimate outcome, only needlessly delay it at great cost.

**12. The Green Spine** - this is a great concept. It was the main goal of *Greening the Red Zone*, formed to be that voice for nature and all the benefits it brings. It is imperative that it is well-executed, **without too much encroachment from ad hoc projects** that could instead be outside it – e.g. food-growing. This is where governance really matters, and keeping the integrity of the whole. We would like to keep any further exotic planting/food forests etc, out of this area. The notable exception could be Richmond Community Garden who we are aware are providing an exemplar of how a community garden can work and engage locals, and who are also planting thousands of natives on the nearby riverbanks. However, we note there is a general **lack of native plantings indicated at the westward end**, and we would caution that encouraging our lost birds into those neighbourhoods, and into the city, requires **continuous habitat**. Avonside can pick up the slack here, and become a lush forest/bush habitat.

**The landings** are quite an inspired idea. We would hope to see these in keeping with the natural setting too, with very careful consideration to the environmental impact of public amenities/toilets etc. But we generally support the landings as welcoming information hubs; places to meet; jumping off points for attractions/activities, potential for small scale food/tourism enterprises. With that in mind, when we look at the **Richmond Landing**, it would seem obvious to have it on the Richmond side of the river

where the activity already is. The impressive **Richmond Community Garden** is directly adjacent the river, and right behind that is **Avebury House**, a destination heritage building. That stretch of River Rd also contains **Di Madgin's heritage garden** and leads to the site of the '**Munted Medway Bridge**'. If the concern is over walkways and on which side of the river they are, it should be noted the Swann's Rd bridge is around 50m away from the landing site, and the re-instated bridge at Medway will also reconnect to Avonside Drive.

## 13. The Reaches

**Ōtākaro Loop Reach** – We essentially support the idea of play and recreation as being integral to the entire red zone. The activities in any of the loops/reaches should be tailored to the land, not the other way round. Various of the activities cited in this reach, could work in any of them. This may also be a good reach for the WhoW Aquasports Park.

**Horseshoe Lake Reach** – Just as the Ōtākaro reach included some food growing/foraging, it is not necessary to define a reach with one activity. Also in general we **do not support the large scale growing of food** in the red zone, outside well-attended community gardens on the margins, where people can benefit from them. Horseshoe reach also has high ecological values and cultural significance that must be respected. The **presevation/enhancement of Waikākāriki-Horseshoe Lake**, making it an unfenced sanctuary of sorts, **regenerating mahinga kai values**, and **stormwater remediation through wetlands** are **key features of this reach**. It would also be a good potential location for a 'star compass', in the heart of the park.

**Eastern Reaches** – It is important the wheels don't fall off in the last stretch, where the fresh and the salt water meet. The coastal enviroment is just as valuable to nature, connection and play as the upstream river environment; and the trail has to make it all the way to the sea, (then there is the potential to take it right round the estuary too!). We love the theme of Experiencing Nature, but then again this to us, is fundamental to the entire park.

Thank you Regenerate Christchurch, on behalf of the Greening the Red Zone Committee:

Tanya Didham  
Celia Hogan  
Colin Meurk  
Lou Stella  
Marilyn Reddington  
Layling Stanbury  
Christine Hickey  
Nicky Snoyink  
Sarah Wyse  
Simone Reddington

**Street address: c/o Tanya Didham, Avebury House, 9 Eveleyn Couzins Ave, Richmond, 8013.**  
**Email is: [greeningtheredzone@gmail.com](mailto:greeningtheredzone@gmail.com)**