

Submission to the Environment and Local Government Select Committee on the Greater Christchurch Regeneration Bill

By Ashley Campbell,

and

Jennifer Miller, Regional Conservation Manager,

Canterbury West Coast,

Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand

and

13 others



We wish to be heard

regeneration

noun

re·gen·er·a·tion \ri-je-nə-'rā-shən, ,rē-\

renewal or restoration of a body, bodily part, or biological system (as a forest) after injury or as a normal process

Meriam Webster Dictionary

The Greater Christchurch Regeneration Bill states it

“supports the regeneration of greater Christchurch”.

While we do not doubt that this is the sincere intention of those drafting the bill, there is a glaring omission in its purposes.

The bill fails to prioritise environmental regeneration, and in doing so fails the people of Christchurch, and of New Zealand.

The bill's five purposes, laid out in clause 3, focus on process; planning; rebuilding; land repair and development; infrastructure and property removal, repair, and development; community participation; local leadership; and management and disposal of red zone land.

At no point do they explicitly include environmental regeneration.

New Zealand is facing a profound, historic opportunity. Out of disaster has come a unique chance to rethink our relationship with nature, and to build environmental resilience into our second-largest city.

We have the opportunity to recreate our city so that it works **with** the environment, rather than trying to subjugate it to our will. The people of Christchurch know only too well that if you ignore nature, sooner or later nature will assert itself. And thousands of people will suffer.

We **must** take this opportunity. Environmental regeneration and resilience must be at the core of any legislation that proposes to support our city's regeneration.

Anything else would be a failure.

The Avon River Red Zone

Running from central Christchurch to the Avon-Heathcote Estuary is 450ha of formerly residential land.

At the time of the first red zone announcement, Minister Gerry Brownlee said this land was so badly damaged that in many places it would need up to 3m of compacted fill, plus many kilometres of perimeter treatment, to ever be suitable for residential development again.

Kahikatea do not need compacted fill or perimeter treatment. Nor do totara, matai, ake ake, harakeke, kowhai, kanuka, and all the other native trees, bushes, and grasses that would have naturally inhabited this land had we let them.

Local and international research has proven time and again the economic, social, educational, and health benefits of access to nature. For example:

- ❖ Public health savings resulting from establishing the Avon River Red Zone as a recreational and ecological reserve would amount to \$50.3 million per year. (Dr Suzanne Vallance, 2013)
- ❖ Wetlands, which much of the Avon River Red Zone was and would be again, provide ecosystem services to the value of \$43,320 per hectare. (Beverley R. Clarkson, 2013)
- ❖ Fewer people living within 3km of green space need treatment for anxiety and mood disorders (such as depression). Every 1% increase in green space is associated with 4% less treatment for anxiety and mood disorders. (Nutsford D, 2013)

- ❖ Trees in Christchurch are already estimated to remove 300 tonnes of air pollutants, valued at \$19.6 million, annually. Of this, 150 tonnes is PM10, valued at \$19.2 million. (Jo-Anne E. Cavanagh, 2009). A large expanse of native forest will remove even more.

These few examples (and there are many more) show that a healthy environment is absolutely crucial to the genuine regeneration of Christchurch – especially given its public and mental health needs, as recently outlined by Canterbury DHB. (Stewart, 2015)

The Avon River Red Zone provides a perfect opportunity to commit to that environmental regeneration, and to the true regeneration of greater Christchurch.

Agencies managing and deciding the future of the Avon River Red Zone

Land Information New Zealand is the agency tasked with managing red-zoned land while its future is decided. This bill gives it many powers, including the power to erect temporary buildings, to close roads and restrict public access, to subdivide, re-subdivide, improve and develop land.

Nowhere is it instructed to manage this land in a way that encourages, or at the very least does not preclude, environmental regeneration.

The bill also states that one of the key agents of regeneration is the aptly named Regenerate Christchurch, whose purpose is to:

“support a vibrant, thriving Christchurch that has economic, social, and lifestyle opportunities for residents, businesses, visitors, investors, and developers”.

Again, the environment is missing.

Yet without a healthy environment, Christchurch’s residents, visitors, and many of its businesses cannot thrive.

Only by including environmental regeneration, focused on the Avon River Red Zone, as a key purpose, can this bill live up to its name, and encourage true regeneration throughout greater Christchurch.

- ❖ We submit that the Greater Christchurch Regeneration Bill should be altered so that clause 3 explicitly includes environmental regeneration as a key purpose.
- ❖ We submit that Land Information New Zealand be instructed to make all decisions and take all actions concerning the Avon River Red Zone in a way that encourages, or at least does not preclude, environmental restoration of that land.
- ❖ We submit that Regenerate Christchurch must explicitly be tasked with fully investigating **all** the financial, social, health, educational, and environmental benefits and costs of returning the Avon River Red Zone to nature, and the costs of failing to do so. It must be instructed to include all these costs and benefits in its recommendations to the Minister.
- ❖ We submit that without environmental regeneration in the Avon River Red Zone the regeneration of greater Christchurch will never be fully complete.

Supporters of this submission

Ashley Campbell	Linwood
Jennifer Miller	Regional Conservation Manager, Canterbury West Coast, Royal Forest and Bird Society of New Zealand
Deirdre Harbord	Mairehau
Evan Smith	Richmond
Frances Truesdale	Mairehau
Helen Campbell	Wigram
Jane Robertson	Governors Bay
Karen Whitla	Cracroft
Linda Harbord	Mairehau
Mark Danks	Brooklands
Mark Gibson	Somerfield
Matt Sole	Alexandra
Michelle Cross	Addington
Philippa Campbell	Burnside
Sasha Stollman	Lyttelton



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