Nelson Tasman Climate Forum

Submission on Tasman District Council Annual Plan 2026-2027

Prepared by NTCF Submissions Group

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SUMMARY

This submission addresses the Tasman District Council Annual Plan 2026-2027, focusing on climate resilience, emissions reduction, and equitable adaptation. Key recommendations include:

- Support charging the 2025 weather recovery rate by capital value rather than uniform rate, with consideration of a hybrid approach
- Support establishing an ongoing Emergency Event Financial Resilience Fund beyond the initial 5-year recovery period
- Oppose slowing depreciation funding for roading assets as this passes costs to future generations
- Request public scrutiny of assumptions underlying the $4.8m rock repair and flood protection programme due to maladaptation risks
- Propose alternative revenue mechanisms including an airport passenger climate levy.

INTRODUCTION

1. The [Nelson Tasman Climate Forum] (NTCF) thanks the Tasman District Council for the opportunity to make a submission on the Tasman District Council Annual Plan 2026-2027.

2. NTCF is a community-led climate action initiative. We aim to weave the community together around urgent, strategic action to achieve the following goals:
   - rapidly reduce the region's greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration and undertake other climate stabilising initiatives, consistent with the urgency of the situation
   - adapt to the likely adverse environmental effects of climate change and the resulting social and cultural effects, using inclusive and responsible decision-making to support these desirable outcomes
   - respond to climate change in a way that recognises the rights of all living organisms, including people, and provides for a just, equitable, and resilient society.

3. We acknowledge the kaitiaki status of local iwi as Manawhenua, tangata whenua of this rohe.

4. *Please note* that whilst the Nelson City Council and Tasman District Council have both signed the Nelson Tasman Climate Forum Charter, this submission has been prepared completely independently of the Councils. This submission is in no way intended and nor should be construed to represent the views of either Council in any way.

SUBMISSION QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Question 0. Which is your preferred option for a new 2025 Weather Events Recovery Rate? Please share any feedback you wish to provide.

In considering this question, we are guided by Goal 3 of the Nelson Tasman Climate Forum:

> *to 'respond to climate change in a way that recognises the rights of all living organisms, including people, and provides for a just, equitable and resilient society'.*

We support the weather event Recovery Rate and the Recovery and Emergency Event Financial Resilience Rate. Costs already incurred should not be passed on to the future, and we need a proactive approach to funding future climate damage.

We address the two issues underlying the four options separately.

1. Uniform rate ($125 per rating unit) vs charging by capital value

We acknowledge there are many potential perspectives on what is a just equitable and resilient society around this issue e.g. property value is an imperfect approximation of wealth or ability to pay/income; wealth is a well-established correlate to climate pollution - which is driving the extreme weather events; many other factors may contribute to the risk of weather damage; and people affected by the weather damage have suffered losses in many other ways.

We further acknowledge that the weather recovery rate is part of a larger overall rate increase that will impose financial burden on many residents/ratepayers.

On balance, we consider charging a uniform weather recovery rate, because it doesn't take account of individual needs (i.e. worsens inequality) and contributory responsibility, would not be the fairest way to apportion the cost. We therefore support charging by capital value, acknowledging however that this is likely to be far from perfect.

An alternative funding approach for the Council to consider could be a split between a uniform charge and charging on the basis of capital value (the same principle underlying Council's non-targeted rates).

We note the decision now will likely set a precedent for funding future severe weather events.

We acknowledge Tasman District Council has a strong partnership relationship with iwi Māori. We do ask, however, that the Council keep firmly in mind that Māori are usually disproportionately affected by extreme weather events and frequently provide magnificent disaster responses to their local communities, and yet emergency response and disaster risk reduction efforts often fail to involve iwi/hapū.[1]

Consequently maintaining and developing stronger relationships with the eight iwi of Te Tau Ihu in relation to climate change mitigation and disaster response must be a priority.

2. Limit to 5 years vs ongoing Emergency Event Financial Resilience Fund

We acknowledge or note:

- the Council's responsibility for funding the weather recovery costs is derived from s.64 of the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002
- the Council is operating in a policy and legislative vacuum from central Government on the question of funding climate change related costs and building resilience
- there is a funding vacuum for our Nationally Determined Contribution 2022-2030 – which is Aotearoa's principal leverage to drive down global emissions and in turn will help reduce the extent of future climate-related damage in Tasman District
- there is very strong evidence that storm frequency and intensity in Te Tau Ihu is increasing[2]
- Aotearoa spends overwhelmingly on responding to natural disasters and a very minor percentage on reducing risk[3]
- there is a strong economic case that investing in risk reduction can greatly reduce spending on response and recovery[4]

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[1] Chair in the Economics of Disasters and Climate Change 2025. Whakahura—extreme events and the emergence of climate change. Victoria University of Wellington.

[2] For example: Bodeker, G.E., S.M. Rosier, T.K. Carey-Smith, et al. 2024. Changing rainfall extremes with climate change in New Zealand: guidance for decision-makers. "Week-long events are becoming about 3% more intense per degree Celsius of warming while hour-long events are increasing at about 18% per degree Celsius".
Stephens, J. 2025. Nelson and Tasman floods.
Sigid, M.F., H. Lewis & L.J. Harrington 2026. Bigger storms, more often: new study projects likely future rainfall impacts on NZ.

[3] Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and Ministry for the Environment 2025. Building New Zealand's long-term resilience to hazards: long-term insights briefing.

[4] For example: IAG New Zealand 2025. New Zealand's $64b spend on natural hazards heavily skewed to recovery over resilience. "International research shows that a dollar invested in risk reduction can reduce spending on response and recovery by four dollars."
Regional and Unitary Councils Aotearoa 2023. Before the deluge 2.0. Updated case for co-investment in flood management infrastructure following Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle. "Flood protection infrastructure delivers one of the highest cost-benefit values compared to other large-scale infrastructure projects, ranging between 1:5 and 1:8. This means for every $1 invested in flood protection, there are between $5-$8 in direct losses avoided."

On balance, assuming we are lucky enough not to have more damaging weather events in the next five years, we support building up a fund to support disaster readiness beyond the first five years – alongside a strong Council programme to reduce risk vulnerability and to build resilience.

The latter is an issue for deep consideration in the forthcoming Long-term Plan deliberations.

Question 1. Do you have any feedback on the proposed operating budget movements?

We support the provision for increased depreciation arising from higher asset valuations, particularly for roading and 3 Waters assets. This reduces passing on costs to the future.

In relation to both operational and capital expenditure, we support the focus Councillor Neubauer is bringing to the structural sources of Council costs e.g. through more concentrated urban design. We envisage this will also provide significant leverage in reducing transport and other sources of climate pollution. Its need is heightened by the fossil fuel crisis sparked by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, ongoing global energy security concerns and the imperative to transition away from fossil fuel dependence.

2a. Do you have any feedback on the progressing or pausing the community facilities projects?

These will have social benefits and would support resilience, for which there is an increasing need (heightened by increased transport costs caused by the current Strait of Hormuz closure). They all have community expectations.

On the other hand, they would contribute to already stretched council debt.

We suggest a concerted effort to find alternative sources of funding and/or reducing cost while retaining functionality and/or project staging if possible.

Question 2b. Do you have any feedback on the proposed changes to the capital programme?

We reiterate our second comment at Question 1.

We have concerns over the June-July 2025 recovery - Rock repair and rebuild Reinstate flood protection $4,800,000 item (as listed in the Capital Programme – Draft Annual Plan 2026/2027).

i. Why is this not considered a weather recovery event cost? To list this as a capital cost, we suggest, obscures the harsh consequences we are experiencing of our reliance on fossil fuels to support our economy and society.

ii. We assume this is the work described at www.tasman.govt.nz/my-council/about-us/media-centre/news-and-notices/river-recovery.

iii. This description makes no zero mention of providing for increased high rainfall frequency and intensities[5], nor for making room for rivers[6]. It doesn't refer to the potential contribution of nature-based solutions to reducing flood flows e.g. reforesting catchments and creating wetlands[7].

iv. Rather, it appears to be largely a reinstatement of the existing stopbank system. If so, we are greatly concerned it risks repeat damage when the next severe weather event occurs.

v. We understand that providing a full river resilience programme will have consequences for people who have homes and livelihoods adjacent to the rivers and that it will come with substantial upfront higher cost than simply reactive reinstatement and small improvements.

vi. The work looks to have significant maladaptation potential (actions taken to adapt to climate change that unintentionally increase vulnerability, create unintended negative consequences, or reduce future options).

vii. We request that the underlying assumptions of this work be put into the public arena for scrutiny.

Question 3. Do you have any feedback on the proposed slowing of planned funding of depreciation for roading assets?

We do not support the slowing of planned funding of deprecation for roading assets. This is yet another instance of passing on costs to the future (like climate change).

[5] Footnote 2, above.
[6] Buchanan, C. 2026. Dan Hikuroa: Let the rivers speak. E-Tangata.
Kay, Tom 2025. WEBINAR – Taking care of our rivers in the face of climate change.
[7] For example: Norton, D. 2026. The role of wetlands in mitigating extreme weather events.

Question 4. Do you have any feedback on the proposed changes to Council's fees and charges?

We ask Council to investigate opportunities from applying the Polluter Pays principle. For example, a $5 levy on the 428 755 passengers departing from Nelson Airport last year could provide $2.1 million in total, or a little over $1 million to each of the two Councils. This could be well used to fund climate resilience and emission reduction projects.

If this can’t be done through this Annual Plan process, then certainly it should be included in the development of the new Long-term Plan.