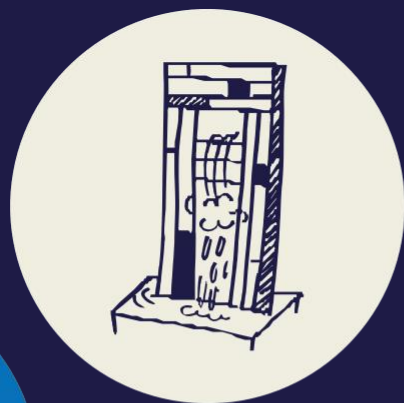


HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL – INITIAL STAFF FEEDBACK

WEL Energy Trust 2024 – 2025 Preliminary Draft Annual Plan

WEL Energy Trust



19 February 2024



**Hamilton
City Council**
Te kaunihera o Kirikiriroa

Improving the Wellbeing of Hamiltonians

Hamilton City Council is focused on improving the wellbeing of Hamiltonians through delivering to our five priorities of shaping:

- **A city that's easy to live in**
- **A city where our people thrive**
- **A central city where our people love to be**
- **A fun city with lots to do**
- **A green city**

The topic of this initial staff feedback is aligned to all of Hamilton City Council's five priorities.

Council Approval and Reference

This initial staff feedback was approved by Hamilton City Council's Chief Executive on 19 February 2024.

Submission # 755.

It should be noted that the following initial feedback is from staff at Hamilton City Council and does not therefore necessarily represent the views of the Council itself.

Key Feedback Points

1. As one of the three capital beneficiaries of the WEL Energy Trust, staff from Hamilton City Council welcome the opportunity provided by the Trust to provide **initial feedback** on the **WEL Energy Trust 2024 – 2025 Preliminary Draft Annual Plan**.
2. We encourage the Trust to increase the level of targeted investment through community grants by bringing community funding to a level that is equal with the discount programme.
3. We invite the Trust to work with the Capital Beneficiaries to explore areas of development and what that could look like in practice for the future. These development areas include:
 - How Capital Beneficiaries are funded and to what levels in the current environment.
 - How best to optimise investment through increased and proactive collaboration with Capital Beneficiaries.
 - The opportunity to collaborate to support implementation of Hamilton City Council's Climate Change Strategy – **Our Climate Future: Te Pae Tawhiti o Kirikiriroa** ([refer here](#)) and the Climate Change Partnership Programme.

Introduction

4. Hamilton City Council staff welcome the opportunity to provide **initial feedback** on the **WEL Energy Trust 2024 – 2025 Preliminary Draft Annual Plan**.
5. We acknowledge the additional time given to the Capital Beneficiaries to provide initial feedback on the Trust's Draft Annual Plan.
6. We note that there are no significant changes from the Trust's current 2023 – 2024 Annual Plan and we continue to support the overall direction and intent of this 2024 – 2025 Draft Annual Plan.
7. As the largest capital beneficiary of the WEL Energy Trust, Hamilton City Council staff:
 - Strongly encourages the Trust to work closely with Council on how strategic city-wide projects are funded, taking a more proactive approach to collaboration.
 - Intend to discuss and highlight what an appropriate level of funding for Council-led projects are in the current environment.
 - Advocate for increased community grants funding for community groups.
 - See an opportunity to collaborate with the WEL Energy Trust to support the Climate Change Partnerships programme.

Proactive Approach to Collaborative Funding is Needed

8. We acknowledge the time taken by WEL Energy Trust representatives to meet with Elected Members and staff in November 2023. We consider this to be the first of many meetings that will take place over the coming year to establish and agree on how the priorities of our community are funded through taking a more strategic and collaborative approach.
9. As we navigate one of the most challenging Long-Term Plans, it is more important than ever before to advocate for increased funding from the Trust for key priority projects that are important to the community. As these projects have wide-reaching and intergenerational benefits to deliver for communities, they therefore require a higher level of investment now to enable community benefits in the future.
10. We see an opportunity for Council and the Trust to develop a more collaborative relationship, acknowledging the Trust's following intentions:
 - *To maximise long-term impact by being strategic.*
 - *To leverage grants through partnerships and collaboration, expanding support beyond grantmaking.*
11. Hamilton City Council, and particularly the work of the Council Community and Social Development Unit, allows Council to work across communities, creating and growing community connections. This work includes support for community-led projects as well as developing Council-led projects where appropriate. Through Council's existing mechanisms, we are uniquely placed to gauge need and consult with the public on emerging and developed community aspirations. Council can be a resource for the Trust when determining how better to maximise community impact and outcomes.

Funding for Capital Beneficiaries

12. We note and acknowledge that the current commitment to work with Capital Beneficiaries remains unchanged from the current and previous Annual Plans.
13. We invite the Trust to work with the Capital Beneficiaries to explore areas of development and what that could look like in practice for the future, which we encourage to include:

- The mechanism in which the Capital Beneficiaries access funding through the Trust – we currently apply for funding through the contestable application process each year. We would like to explore if there's an opportunity to reimagine a more sustainable and strategic way to access/allocate funding to Capital Beneficiaries.
- Alternative or additional funding options for Capital Beneficiary projects of significance – we need to discuss with the Trust whether significant upfront funding can be allocated to city-wide priorities to deliver long term outcomes for the community.

Community Grants

14. Hamilton City Council staff also acknowledge the value of the discount programme to all electricity consumers as another avenue to support the community. We would like to see a shift in the ratio of discounts to community grants, with the portion allocated to grants increased to be of equal value.
15. Councils, and by extension their ratepayers and communities across the country, are facing challenging times ahead. Hamilton City Council's capacity to support community organisations who are working with our most vulnerable and at-risk communities will be impacted. Capital projects with potential to create meaningful change will also be affected. Now more than ever, communities need intentional and targeted support to improve social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing outcomes.
16. We question whether the non-targeted nature of the discount programme delivers proportionate support to vulnerable people and communities, where it is most needed. Community grants allow for a more strategic and needs-based assessment in the allocation of funding, leading to more equitable outcomes in-line with the Trust's aims.
17. We advocate for an increase in funding for community grants to ensure that the Trust continues to operate for the benefit of the community and its needs.

Climate Change

18. We consider there to be close alignment and opportunity to collaborate with the WEL Energy Trust to support implementation of Hamilton City Council's Climate Change Strategy – **Our Climate Future: Te Pae Tawhiti o Kirikiriroa** – [refer here](#)
19. Hamilton City Council has formed a Climate Change Partnerships programme to enable partnership with businesses and community organisations; empower and support businesses and our community to be a part of Hamilton's climate change response; and to support our businesses and community organisations to reduce their emissions.
20. We welcome the Trust becoming a strategic partner in the Climate Change Partnerships programme.
21. We encourage the "Healthy Environment He Taiao Hauora" aim to consider emissions reduction and climate change adaptation, alongside the existing priorities of waste minimisation, environmental education and locally led initiatives. This would provide more direction and greater commitment to towards low-carbon transition and preparing for the changing climate, which is currently missing from the aims.
22. We also support and note Section 3 (page 9) *"Working with WEL Networks Ltd to benefit electricity consumers and the wider community"*, *"How can we support energy efficiency initiatives"*, and *"How can we support De-carbonisation initiatives and programmes"*. We see a clear alignment and opportunity to collaborate and support implementation of Hamilton City Council's Climate Strategy – **Our Climate Future: Te Pae Tawhiti o Kirikiriroa**.

Further Information

23. Should the WEL Energy Trust require clarification of the initial feedback from Hamilton City Council staff, or additional information, please contact **Lisa Topcsov** (Acting City Investment Director - Community Partnerships, Funding and Events) on **07 929 2715** or email lisa.topcsov@hcc.govt.nz in the first instance.
24. Hamilton City Council staff welcome the opportunity to discuss the content of this initial feedback in more detail with the WEL Energy Trust.
25. Staff also anticipate making a submission to the Trust's approved 2024 – 2025 Draft Annual Plan during the formal consultation period that is scheduled to commence on 28 February 2024.

Yours faithfully



Lance Vervoort
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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