

**15 March 2013**

**Media Release**

**EDS welcomes draft Auckland Unitary Plan**

The Environmental Defence Society has welcomed the release of the draft Auckland Unitary Plan.

“Auckland Council has passed two key tests with this draft,” said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“First, it has reduced a pile of plans that stood more than two metres high to a much shorter, simpler and integrated document. That will make it easier for plan users.

“Secondly, the Council has nailed the issues of urban form and growth. Auckland’s future will be a sensible balance of infill development (avoiding heritage areas) and greenfield expansion. It has provided for 7 years forward land supply in this draft with the expectation that by the time of formal notification in September, it will have provided more.

“This should get the Government off Auckland’s back and remove the need for the extreme and undemocratic intervention powers contained in the recently proposed changes to the Resource Management Act.

“The plan appears to tackle natural resource management issues well. It has permissive zoning for development areas and restrictive zoning for conservation areas. This clarity and precision will give everyone more certainty and is a change from the woolly language and provisions that characterised the legacy plans it replaces.

“There are some omissions that will need fixing. These include inadequate provisions relating to the marine area. Auckland’s marine space is larger than its land area and contains critically threatened species including Maui’s dolphin and Bryde’s whale. These have not been adequately addressed in the draft Unitary Plan. Council will need to considerably beef up its marine management provisions.

“There will undoubtedly be other omissions, inadequacies and technical errors that will need to be fixed and the public will want to have proper input into the substantive proposals. We have a good six months to do that - which is a lot longer than the Government is giving New Zealanders to comment on the currently proposed RMA reforms. Then there will be further opportunities for input when the formal hearing process starts.

“EDS will be completing a thorough analysis of the environmental management provisions in the Unitary Plan and will be hosting a one day workshop on them next month.

“Overall, the draft Unitary Plan is a major step forward for Auckland and should stimulate a healthy and constructive debate about the region’s future,” Mr Taylor concluded.

*Gary Taylor (021) 895 896*