Z-NET Roundtable – Terms of Reference (2022 update)

1. Project Background

Throughout 2018, the Hepburn Shire Zero Net Emissions Transition (Z-NET) Project was undertaken. This project received grant funding from Sustainability Victoria, Hepburn Shire Council, Hepburn Wind, Samsø Energy Academy (Denmark), Diversicon Environmental Foundation and others. There was significant in-kind support also offered throughout the project, from within and outside the Shire.

The project is building on the long-standing leadership of the Hepburn Shire community and sustainability groups and is intended to support and expand upon this community-led action. Significant work was carried out in developing an emissions baseline for the Shire based on local, real-world datasets. This has helped to highlight areas of priority for emission reduction actions.

This baseline, together with technical analysis carried out by the Z-NET team and a significant number of historical documents, ideas and concepts from community, was compiled in the Z-NET Community Transition Plan (CTP). The CTP outlines steps which can be taken to achieve zero net emissions within the Hepburn Shire by 2029. It was formally launched on 4 April 2019. The Plan should not be seen as definitive but it has been recognised as a strong guide for action: it will continue to develop. Implementation of the CTP is already underway through a combination of local projects.

The Z-NET Community Advisory Panel which guided the development of the CTP has now evolved into a Roundtable, with membership from around the Shire. The Roundtable will help to guide and implement the CTP, moving forward. The founding Z-NET Roundtable includes representatives from Trentham Sustainability Group, Transition Creswick, the former Sustainable Hepburn Association (SHARE), the former Clunes Sustainability Group, Mollongghip and District Community Power Hub, Hepburn Wind (now Hepburn Energy), Hepburn Shire Council and community members from around the Shire.

2. Z-NET Roundtable Function

The Roundtable will function to provide a forum for community members in the Hepburn Shire to seek and offer input regarding the steps taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the Shire. The Roundtable will work to guide, develop and implement projects based on this input.

3. Role of the Z-NET Roundtable

The Z-NET Roundtable mandate is:

- Championing the CTP: a plan of action that outlines and coordinates mutually reinforcing activities.
- Z-NET Targets: having a common agenda for change including a shared understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.
- Collaborating around Z-NET programs: enhance the impact of individual sustainability groups and local stakeholders through collective actions, open and continuous communication across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives and create common motivation.
- Tracking implementation and emissions reduction: overseeing and measuring results consistently to ensure shared measurement for alignment and accountability.

Council role: To provide backbone support to help coordinate the Roundtable.

The Roundtable is intended to support and complement the existing work of the respective community groups and individuals, rather than detract from it. In its present form, the functions of the Roundtable include:

- To support the design and delivery of the Implementation Plan. This includes recommendations for funding from the Z-NET Climate Resilience Fund.
- To provide advice and comment on the Z-NET Roundtable Framework and communicate feedback between organisations, community and Council.
- To encourage community consultation and engagement, and discuss new concepts and projects brought forward by community members.
- To act as a regular structured meeting opportunity for members to network with other groups within the Shire and share activities.
- To support and assist with research and community engagement activities.
- To promote a shared knowledge and understanding of the Shire's commitment to emission reduction.

3.1. Ideas

Members are encouraged to bring new project ideas to the group for discussion, development and implementation. Concepts can be sent to the Secretary up to seven (7) days prior to the meeting. The Secretary will liaise with the Chair to determine the item’s inclusion in the meeting agenda.

3.2. Advocacy

The Roundtable will be a used to bring the existing, and any emerging groups from around the Shire together to support the Z-NET project and the projects of members. Members will advocate for Z-NET where possible. The Z-NET Roundtable should also use this network to support and advocate for the members’ respective groups and projects, where those projects align with the remit of the Roundtable

3.3. Review

The Roundtable will review and provide input on the Z-NET CTP and direction of projects. It is acknowledged that some aspects of the CTP will require input from outside of the Roundtable, but changes to the CTP will be discussed with the group.

The Implementation Plan will be reviewed annually.

Roundtable Operations

4.1. Term

The term of the Z-NET project is for a period of ten (10) years. Terms for membership will be 12 months, commencing in December each year (between 2019 – 2021 the new Roundtable group commenced in May). Existing Roundtable Members may reapply.

4.2. Meetings

It is expected that the Reference Group will meet once every quarter, with more frequent meeting or events to be scheduled if necessary. Meetings will aim to be no more than 1.5 hours in duration. Additional time commitments such as reviewing documents and attending extra events or meetings will be arranged as required.

4.3. Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

Members have a responsibility to disclose any direct or indirect conflict of interest or potential conflict between their business or professional interests, and their roles as members of the Roundtable. The Roundtable will then refer to the Z-NET Roundtable's Conflict of Interest Policy and decide how best to proceed with the discussion.

4.4. Agenda

The Secretary, in consultation with the Chairperson, is responsible for the preparation and circulation of meeting agendas and attachments. The agenda and attachments will be distributed at least seven (7) working days prior to the next scheduled meeting. Agenda items must be forwarded to the Secretary by the close of business, ten (10) working days prior to the next scheduled meeting. Members may raise an item under 'Other Business' if necessary and as time permits, at the discretion of the Chairperson.

Agendas will generally be structured as follows:

- Traditional Owners acknowledgement.
- Attendance (members present and apologies).
- Actions arising from previous meeting and their outcomes.
- Updates from respective groups or members.
- Items for Discussion.
- Other Business.

- Next Meeting details and review of actions. This includes selection of the next Chairperson.

Project status updates will occur via a written update to be distributed with the agenda and attachments prior to the meeting. All urgent project updates will be covered under 'Items for Discussion' and other appropriate opportunities during the meeting.

4.5. Meeting Minutes

The Secretary will be responsible for supporting the meeting. A minute taker will be provided by the Secretary. Previous meeting minutes will be circulated at least five (5) working days prior to a meeting and emailed to Roundtable members.

4.6. Chairperson

The Chairperson will be rotated each meeting in alphabetical order based on member surnames. Roundtable members will confirm the next Chair at the preceding meeting. The Chair will liaise with the Secretary to ensure all agenda items are finalised at least five (5) days prior to the meeting.

4.7. Reporting Requirements

The Roundtable is not a formal decision-making body but rather a reference group providing advice and expertise. This input will require decisions to be made, but only on issues pertaining to the Roundtable or implementation of the Z-NET project. When a formal endorsement is required for an initiative to proceed, input from the group will need to be taken to the relevant governing body for endorsement.

4.8. Decision making

The overarching intention for all decision-making is to be highly participatory, inclusive and collaborative. This means to at all times be working for consensus, by which is meant decisions which all parties involved can 'live with' without compromising issues of fundamental importance ~ as distinct to needing to be unanimous. If consensus cannot be reached after reasonable attempts have been made, then decisions will be made by super-majority (i.e. at least 75%). No Member is able to dominate deliberations or control decisions. Being a 'participant' for decision-making can occur by the following means: face-to-face, by telephone, email, video conference or any other practical means determined in advance. A proxy can also be provided for this purpose.

5. Membership

The Roundtable will consist of at least five (5) members and a maximum of twelve (12) members. New members will be appointed through a vote.

5.1. Expression of Interest (EOI) and appointment to the Roundtable

An invitation for Expressions of Interest (EOI) will be publicly advertised and circulated through numerous community networks including: Participate Hepburn and other Council communications, Facebook (Hepburn Z-NET and Council pages), appropriate local media outlets, Sustainability groups' contact lists and

media, Hepburn Energy's emailing list and other relevant media platforms.

Appointment of Roundtable members will consider the following:

- The availability of members to attend Roundtable meetings and events.
- The geographical location of members in the Shire. This is to ensure representation across the Shire.
- Expertise of members and ability to inform and strengthen the CTP.

The recruitment process will occur as follows:

- Invitation for EOIs circulated.
- EOIs received by delegate's contact.
- Appointment Committee is to recommend new Members for endorsement. The Appointment Committee is to be appointed by the existing Roundtable and will comprise of 3 members (1 Council + 1 Hepburn Energy representative) and an elected member of the Roundtable.
- Prospective members invited to the December Roundtable meeting.
- Community vote upon appointment of new members (endorsement by the existing Roundtable at the final meeting for that group in late November of each year).
- Prospective Roundtable member agrees to Terms of Reference.

5.2. Backbone support of the Roundtable

Although it is expected that representation from many of the local climate action and sustainability organisations across the Shire will participate on the Z-NET Roundtable each year, the provision of backbone support is required by Council and Hepburn Energy to ensure that organisation of meetings, workshops, reading material and other additional workloads that are inappropriate for Roundtable members are undertaken. This is in line with the current Memorandum of Understanding between Hepburn Shire Council and Hepburn Energy to work together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the Hepburn Shire.

At the commencement of each new Roundtable annually, both Council and Hepburn Energy will nominate their one (1) secretariat/backbone representative on the Roundtable.

5.3. Councillor representation on the Roundtable

From November 2022 onwards, Z-NET Roundtable membership will be offered to Hepburn Shire Councillors for nomination of one (1) Councillor to join the Roundtable for that 12-month period. Membership rights and requirements will be identical to other Community Roundtable members as outlined in this Terms of Reference.

The Councillor nomination will take place as part of the annual 'Councillor Representation on Committees, Boards and External Bodies' process which takes place at a Council meeting in November each year. The Councillor nomination process will take place separately and in place of the standard EOI process detailed in Section 5.1.

5.4. Contribution from Members

The Chair is responsible for ensuring the Roundtable operates efficiently, effectively and according to the Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct. The Chair will act to enable all members to have equal opportunity to contribute. In the event of the absence of the Chair from a meeting, members present have the authority to appoint one of their members to act as a Chair.

The following commitments are expected of members:

- To be supportive of the process.
- To read information provided prior to the meeting.
- To provide apologies when unable to attend meetings.

5.5. Apologies

Members are requested to inform the Chairperson if they are unable to attend a meeting.

5.6. Code of Conduct

All members will read and abide by the Hepburn Z-NET Code of Conduct at all times.