

2022 Local Body Elections

Greater Wellington Regional Council candidates (Porirua-Tawa) response to survey related to health of Te Awarua o Porirua harbour and catchments -

Candidates were asked three questions:

1. What are the challenges facing the harbour and its catchments?
2. What are your priorities for protecting and enhancing the quality of the harbour and its catchments, particularly its streams, wetlands and contributing watercourses?
3. What will you do about these challenges and priorities if you're elected?

CHRIS KIRK BURNNAND

1. What are the challenges facing the harbour and its catchments?

- During my first term on GW I have had direct involvement in working to get solutions to our inner and outer harbours and the catchments that directly affect us.
- This has involved 333 and 461 Grays Road along with the 50 culverts entering our inner harbour where there have been issues that are leading to polluting our waterways. Working directly with GW officers I have come to understand that there is a significant gulf between solutions that we need to provide to protect the environment and the very limited action provided by GW. In these cases, both rubber pollutants and significant siltation have occurred. Regarding these issues, I have worked closely with our Chief Executive and members of our Executive Leadership Team. I have also been lucky to have the 3-term experience of Jenny Brash and understand these poor outcomes have been going on for far too long. Progress is being made but it is painfully slow.
- Porirua Stream has been also an area of focus. Willowbank Road where significant streamside damage has polluted the outer harbour as the LAWA Estuary web site shows. Also working with Glenside Residents Assn. about the siltation coming from Stebbings Valley development directly into Porirua Stream. Both issues involve WCC and GW however we are bringing an increasing level of focus onto the changes we need to reduce the significant siltation. The local community organisations are active and Stronger leadership towards a solutions-based approach is what I am working towards with support from GW Chair.
- These are direct examples of the ongoing lack of results that I am engaged in changing so that we progress environmental outcomes. GW is very good at planning but in several areas very poor at implementing its plans.

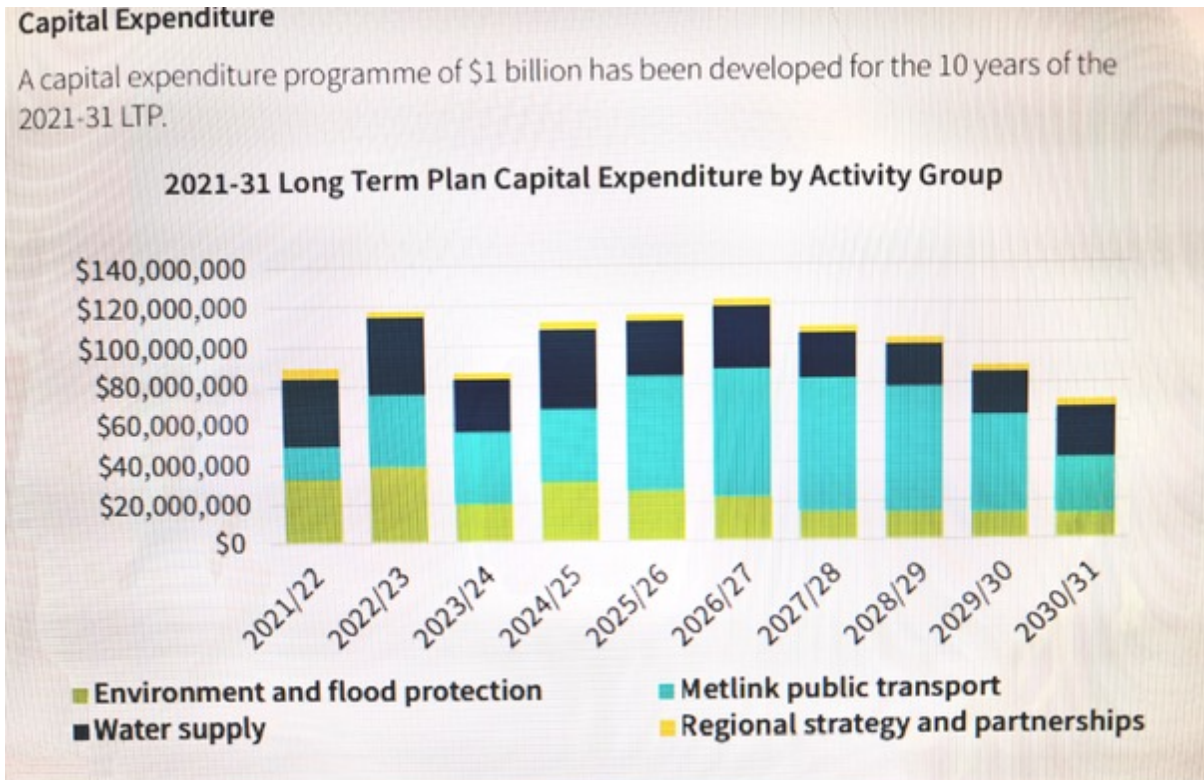
2. What are your priorities for protecting and enhancing the quality of the harbour and its catchments, particularly its streams, wetlands and contributing watercourses?

- The Whaitua and its 75 recommendations have moved very slowly. With the experience of Jenny Brash we were able to get a \$400k allocated to progressing these issues however mainly regarding planning rather than direct action. GW is going through an organisational change “Fit for the Future” and developing an agile approach that allows us to focus on outcomes is where the greatest opportunity exists. Over the next 4 years we have almost \$10 million of planting in our Regional Parks in our budget. For Battle Hill and Belmont areas this will have a beneficial impact for Porirua, and this is complimentary to the planting programme lead by PCC. Much of this work cannot be sped up as the growing of plant stock is a current challenge across the Region. As an example, we have thousands of Willows we grow each year for planting our riversides and these are now a hybrid so that they do not grow wild and block the rivers in areas. Planting riversides, swale creation and more active prosecution of those that create the siltation will have a significant difference. Although more than 1000 warnings were made to Transmission Gully there was little in the way of rectification for those issues, this just illustrates that we need to take different approaches and have an outcomes focus as an organisation.
- Wetlands are a current issue as early this year we lost a wetlands prosecution, and the Courts were very critical of GW. This will lead to us focussing on mainly significant Wetlands and further protecting them. In QEII Park we are rewetting some 40 Hectares of peatland which aligns with extending wetlands.
- Although my community involvement in Porirua Tawa is largely around youth education and educational advancement, I am very supportive of our voluntary organisations that really are at the heart of all successful communities. There is a clear need to build a better relationship between how GW, volunteer groups and local Iwi work together, as greater alignment over these challenges will speed up progress. Often, I hear frustration expressed about reducing silt however where our planting programmes are the key in most cases 4-5 years of growth of new plantings is required before significant filtering occurs.

3. What will you do about these challenges and priorities if you're elected?

- I have attached the Capital Expenditure graph of GW Long Term Plan. At the time I questioned the decreasing amount going into our environment. This was not because I had any special knowledge of needs but rather, I know that environmental investment has long term benefits whereas with our Transport where significant investment occurs, we have rising costs and decreasing passenger numbers (costs up 37.7% over 4 years and passenger trips down 32.5%) a trend that is clearly unsustainable for both passengers and ratepayers. I had been on GW Council for 6 months when this LTP was approved and did not understand the significance of how this would affect 3 years of work. I had expected a degree of flexibility and agility in our operations that would allow GW to refine and adjust as we moved forward. Even experienced Councillors did not comment on this issue. If I am returned, I

will bring a far more robust approach to our next 10-year LTP that will be set early in the new Triennium. I hold a strong view that the biggest gains will come from modest organisational changes which will move our focus from planning to implementing the plans we have approved.



HIKITIA ROPATA

1. Key challenges facing our harbour and its catchments?

Water Quality

- The speed and impact of urban development resulting in increased sediment loads flowing into our harbour and inter-connected waterways
- The impact of climate change (including severe weather bombs) is affecting our stormwater, wastewater systems and some of our fragile landscapes and waterways in our community
- Our ageing infrastructure, leaking pipes, incorrectly connected pipes as well as runoff from impervious surfaces is impacting on water quality across the network
- Wastewater overflows/discharges exposes our most vulnerable members of our community (human effluent) to unnecessary health risks
- Stormwater discharges contributes to poor water quality across our water network impacting on our native fish population including their swimming and spawning channels as well as our freshwater fauna
- The biggest challenge we face are the changes in behaviours, attitudes and habits that we need members of our community to make in order to reduce further degradation and focus on regeneration

2. What are your priorities for protecting and enhancing the quality of the harbour and its catchments, particularly its streams, wetlands and contributing watercourses?

- Focussed attention on the implementation, monitoring and resourcing of the Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua Implementation Programme
- Stop further degradation.
- Our ageing water infrastructure needs re-thinking, re-prioritising and replacing!
- Enable more support and resources for the network of organisations, volunteers and whānau who contribute to protect our harbour, tributaries, eco-systems from further degradation
- Build an educative information campaign to inform, influence and engage our communities across Porirua to encourage behaviour

3. What will you do about these challenges and priorities if you're elected?

- Advocate on behalf of all the current and future community members of our Ward
- Provide quality advice using my policy experience and skills
- Challenge xx and create opportunities for change
- Pressure GWRC and PCC for the Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua Implementation Programme
- Investment in our ageing infrastructure

ROBYN SMITH

Te Awarua-o-Porirua has significance to a lot of people. Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira, who are mana whenua and kaitiaki of the harbour have a vision for Te Awarua-o-Porirua: 'That the mauri of Te Awarua-o-Porirua is restored, and its waters are healthy so that all those that live in the region, including Ngāti Toa and our manuhiri, can enjoy, live and play in our environment and future generations are sustained, physically and culturally.

Most people who live in Porirua are connected to the harbour and would agree with this vision. Recreation opportunities in the harbour include a plethora of water-based activities such as waka ama, yachting, boating, fishing and kayaking. Around the edge we can fish, walk our dogs, picnic, watch wildlife, exercise or just relax.

On a calm blue sky day, the harbour (both arms) looks beautiful. The water looks clear and blue and we can see birds diving for fish or, even on occasion, see orca or dolphins fishing. What lies beneath the surface however is not blue; it's brown, polluted, muddy and in places toxic.

Sedimentation

Ever since the catchments were first cleared and wetlands drained for farming, sediment has been pouring into the harbour at ever increasing rates. Studies show rates of sedimentation vary around different parts of the harbour from -5 to 11 mm annually.

However, rates during high rainfall events such as the one in 2016 following the Seddon earthquake increased to 27mm in the Kakaho catchment.

Sedimentation from rural land is increasing because during high rainfall events, which are becoming more frequent and intense, erodible land slips, and streambanks erode.

Urbanisation has increased flooding because hard surfaces prevent water soaking into the ground.

Our catchments are mainly steep and short which means streams rapidly rise. Many of the streams in the catchments of Te Awarua-o-Porirua have streambank erosion which contributes significant amounts of sediment to the harbour.

Properties near the bottom of the catchment in Plimmerton flood because most of the catchment is cleared of forests and many of the arms of Taupō swamp are no longer functioning as wetlands. Wetlands reduce flooding by absorbing large amounts of water to be released slowly later. The proposed development between Pukerua Bay and Plimmerton will increase flooding downstream due to the huge increase in hard surfacing.

Thirteen percent of the catchments are in production forestry which are due to be harvested within 10 years. Based on very old and incorrect information, no land with production forests in the catchments have been identified as highly erodible and will therefore not require a resource consent to harvest.

Pathogen contamination

Faecal indicator bacteria are found in our waterways and harbour. Some of this contamination comes from agricultural run-off. However historical underfunding of wastewater infrastructure means the infrastructure is over capacity. Many pump stations and pipes discharge sewage into the harbour, especially when it rains. Additionally, poor design of older household wastewater systems, allow for cross-contamination of stormwater into sewerage pipes adding to pollution.

Toxicants

Four major toxic substances which can be lethal for aquatic species are found in Te Awarua-o-Porirua.

Run-off from urban areas washes heavy metals and other contaminants into the estuary. Copper from vehicles on roads and zinc from roofs and roads are found in sediments. Levels are mostly moderate for most of Te Awarua-o-Porirua, however where there is housing and roads or industrial areas, concentrations are higher and are often associated with wastewater overflows.

Ammonia and nitrate levels are lower except near urban areas where they can reach short term peaks after wastewater overflows.

Ecological issues

There are many ecological issues facing the harbour and catchments. 50% of the salt marshes in the Pāuatahanui Arm have been lost and almost all salt marsh in the Onepoto arm is gone. Sediments cover some sea grass and cockle beds, algal blooms occur due to high water temperatures and high levels of light, there is loss of habitat for aquatic invertebrates and lack of spawning habitats for native fish. Reclamation of vast parts of the harbour has destroyed the lower reaches of streams which is native fish spawning habitat. The Wellington region has only 2.3% of the original extent of wetlands remaining as at 2014. This percentage is likely to be even lower now. Porirua has no specific data on wetland loss.

The Taupō swamp complex is classified as a “Natural wetland with outstanding biodiversity values”. The catchment of Taupō Swamp has been identified for housing development which will mean accelerated change from wetland to scrub, loss of biodiversity and negative impacts from earthworks, pest animals, pest plants and changes to hydrology.

Priorities for protecting and enhancing the quality of the harbour and its catchments, particularly its streams, wetlands and contributing watercourses?

Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua committee published an implementation plan in 2019 with 75 recommendations to improve the health of our waterways and harbour.

On 25 August 2022, Councillors of Greater Wellington Regional Council were given an update on the implementation plan of the Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua committee. Many of the whaitua committee's recommendations for changing the Proposed Natural Resource plan, the policy document which controls the effects on the environment, will not begin until 2024. Our waterways and harbour cannot wait for the rules and policies that protect our waterways to be changed

The plan recommends a significant reduction of sedimentation. This can be done by ensuring consent conditions for earthworks are strong enough to prevent impacts on our waterways. Consent conditions need to be monitored, and breaches should have consequences. Longer term, sedimentation can be reduced by revegetating streambanks and reforesting erodible land in the catchments.

GWRC should be implementing the National Policy statement for freshwater by protecting all natural wetlands so there should be no further loss of wetlands or degradation of wetlands. There is a misconception that natural wetlands should be used to prevent sediments and other pollutants from entering waterways. Natural wetlands should not be used to allow negative impacts from land development. All pollutants must be prevented from reaching natural wetlands.

Protecting any remaining native vegetation in the catchments whether on public or private land, and incentivising retiring erodible land will help prevent erosion and provide landowners an income from carbon farming.

What will you do about these challenges and priorities if you're elected?

One councillor can't achieve policy change on their own.

I will work with other councillors to produce a set of policy guidelines of councillor expectations for outcomes from land use consent applications.

A review of the Regional Council's Monitoring and Enforcement Strategy is required. More stringent monitoring and enforcement of consent conditions will act as a deterrent to consent holders to ignore consent conditions.

I will also push hard for councillors to adequately fund its regulatory arm and have consent holders pay the true cost of development. This won't prevent development but it will mean a shift to sustainable development.

Councillors should get a monthly update on each consent processed, the scope of the consent and the nature of conditions imposed in the consent

The Regional Council is phasing out grazing in its regional parks and is reforesting the parks with local native plants. I would like to see this accelerated and expanded with Te Awarua-o-

Porirua catchments a high priority. This will help reduce flooding and emissions, and provide more habitat for wildlife.

Flood Protection reviews are needed for all catchments to take into account our changing weather patterns due to climate change. The Regional Council is currently regrouping staff into catchment teams. I would like Council to use this opportunity to have a comprehensive review of how staff can achieve integrated solutions for preventing flooding and erosion, reducing our region's emissions and enhancing biodiversity values.