

2022 Local Body Elections

Wellington City Council candidates (Mayor, Takapū/Northern General Ward, e Whanganui-a-Tara Māori Ward, Tawa Community Board 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?

Mayoral candidates

ELLEN BLAKE

Thanks for these great questions. I am actively involved in many bush restoration projects and one of these roles is with the Growing Places Charitable Trust which seeks to demonstrate through projects how to enhance waterways and public transport corridors. We are currently working on the KETE project on upper Takapu Gorge Road, and are active on Porirua Stream at Wall Place, a project on Kenepuru Stream, and Paremata rail station area. Wellington City Council are involved in the KETE project.

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

The challenges facing the Porirua harbour relate to loss of native ecosystems, siltation and pollution with increasing urban areas and the associated impermeable surfaces creating more flash flooding issues.

2 What are your priorities for protection and enhancement of the harbour and its catchments, particularly streams, wetlands and contributing watercourses?

I have two priorities for all of Wellington including the Porirua catchment:

One is to manage stormwater through better water sensitive urban design in all urban developments. The use of parks as high peak water storage, wetland development and use of swales etc.

The second is to increase and improve the variety of blue and green spaces available and use these spaces to increase native biodiversity. That is restoring native ecosystems along streams and use green spaces as corridors for both fauna and flora. A recent visit to Kenepuru rail station showed some good growth of natives in one section and it would be great to see this extend along the whole stream.

Both of these feed into my third priority which is to support quality housing for all - both better stormwater management and more green space help here.

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

Make sure the funding follows the priorities, there is a catchment plan and there are projects happening in it, and monitor the outcomes.

ANDY FOSTER

Biggest challenges are from sediment and pollutants entering streams and then the harbour. Sediment covering up shellfish and filling the harbours, pollutants including from road runoff - things like zinc etc. Also ecoli from wastewater interconnections.

Response needs to be controls on development standards to prevent run off, behaviour change so people understand where stormwater goes, progressively dealing with wastewater interconnections (public and private systems) and planting and other means of detaining pollutants and sediments before they reach waterways. Protecting upper catchments - for example in Wellington our Green Belt, and preventing stream culverting. Key opportunities for Wellington City are in the District Plan - currently in the submission phase, and subdivision design, investment in wastewater infrastructure, and working collaboratively on education for our wider community so that people better understand the condition of the harbours, what damages them, and what can be done to help them.

e Whanganui-a-Tara Māori Ward

NĪKAU WI NEERA

1. The most pressing concern, in my opinion, is the consequences of sewage and storm water. Most pipes around Porirua are over-capacity and regularly leak sewage into the harbour because of a lack of infrastructure investment from successive local authorities. Storm water and sewerage pipes are cross contaminated, and thus when it rains the infrastructure is overloaded and results in leaks, spillages, and contamination of the harbour.

Waste spills into the harbour not only from Pari-a-Rua but also from Churton Park, Grenada, Johnsonville, and the surrounding areas governed by the Wellington City Council. However, this all hits a bottleneck at the Pari-a-Rua treatment plant, and the plant simply does not have the capacity to cope with such volumes. This results in untreated sewage discharges, notably at Rukutane Point.

Finally, reports are growing with worrying frequency about pollution by heavy metals, and the increased sedimentation of the harbour's shallower areas. Both of these make the harbour incredibly hostile to marine life, causing catastrophe for the local ecosystem.

2. My priority to address some of these long-felt issues is greater investment in WCC pipes coming from the aforementioned Wellington suburbs that flow into Te Awarua. Reducing the volume of sewage running into the Pari-a-Rua plant is crucial to preventing the overflows when usage is high, and builds resilience for other wastewater systems in the area. This should also go some way to reducing the dangerously high levels of E. Coli found in the harbour. I strongly support the recommendations of Ngāti Toarangatira's Whaitua implementation plan to mitigate these concerns.

Experts have also found that the increase of cars and trucks driving near Te Awarua have led to dangerous levels of copper and zinc being found in the water, which are extremely toxic to marine life. I will work with iwi Porirua City Council, and Greater Wellington Regional Council to create a moder, sustainable transport system that moves our whole region away from private vehicles, cutting our carbon emissions and reducing the volume of heavy metals entering Te Awarua.

Finally, I will combat nitrogen leakage into Te Awarua by assisting GWRC in the careful management of farmland, and advocating Government for a concerted move away from synthetic nitrogen fertilisers in our region, which is notorious for polluting the waterways and streams that flow into Te Awarua.

3. To implement these changes, I will work tirelessly with iwi, PCC, and GWRC to create a unified strategy that helps the ancestral waters of the Ngāti Toa thrive, and nourish future generations living in Pari-a-Rua and Te Whanganui-a-Tara.

Takapū/Northern General Ward

JENNIE CONDIE

Before I jump in to the answers I just want to note that as the councillor for Takapū Northern ward in Wellington City I have focused my answers on that specific catchment which I'm familiar with. I'm not familiar with the wider issues faced across other catchments, although I imagine they are similar.

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

From the catchment running from Johnsonville via Tawa to the harbour there are challenges with increased sediment run off (particularly from earthworks undertaken to create flat residential platforms for building new homes), increased stormwater flows from the increase of development in Churton Park, and potential leakage of sewage from the wastewater network into ground water. All of these reduce water quality which damages the ecosystem and makes it less safe to paddle, swim, and collect food from the Porirua Stream and the harbour. Increased water flow and flood risk also damages ecosystems as well as being a threat to property.

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

1. Reduce the amount of earthworks that are consented and monitor earthworks that are consented closely for compliance to consent conditions.
2. Require water sensitive design for new buildings to reduce stormwater runoff. Encourage rain water tanks for existing properties.
3. Extend the pilot programme from the Owhiro Bay catchment that searched for wastewater leaks and cross connections, and then fixed those in the public network and issued notices to fix for those on private networks.
4. Monitor water quality in the Porirua Stream

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

The WCC Proposed District Plan already includes stronger provisions regarding earthworks and water sensitive design. We need to review the lessons learned from the Owhiro Bay project and then make a plan to roll it out across Wellington city. I would prioritise catchments with open streams first, which would include Kaiwharawhara, Karori, and Porirua Streams. We should investigate programmes that encourage the installation of rainwater tanks and copy what has worked elsewhere. In Wellington this programme is run by the Wellington Regional Emergency Management Office as part of improving community resilience during natural disasters. Council needs to work more closely with WREMO on these efforts. Wellington Water has been working on improving the availability of water quality data via the Water That Counts programme and we need to ensure that continues and is refined based on community feedback.

BEN MCNULTY

You've touched on an important issue which frankly doesn't get the awareness or attention it deserves at the Wellington City Council level. Given I wouldn't represent Porirua I have focused my attention to the stream which starts in my ward. See my answers below:

1. Pollution feeding into the harbour directly via the Porirua Stream as well as run-off and waste from the rest of Porirua City. Climate change events are increasing both the severity and frequency of major weather events resulting in additional pollution.
 2. The harbour isn't part of Wellington City and the governance of Porirua Stream is the responsibility of GWRC so there are some limitations as to what I can achieve as a Wellington City Councillor but that doesn't put me or WCC off the hook. Ensuring passage of the hydraulic neutrality provisions in the proposed district plan is the highest priority. This will retain water on properties bordering watercourses (including the Porirua Stream) reducing sediment and pollution run-off.
 3. I'll work very closely with GWRC to update the existing watercourse agreement for the Porirua Stream which dates back to the 1970's (when Tawa was a borough council). Making clear the responsibility of which authorities have ownership for which problems in the stream. I'll also pressure GWRC to take a tougher stand on the developments in Grenada Village/Churton Park that produce silt run-off collecting in the stream.
- e Whanganui-a-Tara Māori Ward

ROBYN PARKINSON

I've made the decision not to fill in any surveys. I feel that standing with party affiliation and with a clear policy statement (see our Wellington Greens webpage) should be enough guidance for voters. Fair enough for those who run as independent - voters need more reassurance from them as to what they stand for.

In this case, my views are unlikely to differ from fellow Greens who have responded to your survey, but I hope you can understand my decision to go with a 'no survey response' decision.

TONY RANDLE

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

While I understand the importance of the Porirua water catchment and harbour, I have only limited knowledge of the issues you face. I understand the most important issue is increased sedimentation into the harbour with the threat that the inlet will be infilled unless this is controlled. Other issues are the impact of chemical and overflow sewage from major downfalls. Finally, there is also a significant erosion issue and, of course, a need to protect the remaining natural areas.

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

As a Takapū/Northern Ward Councillor, my #1 environmental priority is to ensure the Wellington City Council works closely with Porirua and regional councils on protecting the Porirua Stream Catchment to reduce flooding and erosion. I also support Wellington City Council's work to restore natural habitat, especially across the town belt and council-owned significant natural areas. And I want the WCC to support community groups who wish to increase biodiversity and eliminate pests.

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

I will be a councillor who actively engages with the key stakeholders who want to protect and enhance the harbour. I know I have much to learn about these issues but I will work to get the understanding required to help guide resources and planning rules towards better environmental outcomes. Most of the Wellington City Northern Ward is part of, in terms of nature, the Porirua Harbour Catchment and, as such, we must play our parts to be good guardians of our environment.

JAMES SULLIVAN

1. From my limited understanding, the biggest issues are the runoff from large amounts of low density development and the runoff from motor vehicle pollution such as oils and tyre dust. These are things that are effectively poisoning our local harbour environment.

2. Related to my answer above, I think some of the biggest things we can do are increasing the density of land development so less is needlessly disturbed and investing in transport modes that result in a lot less runoff. Added to this a big investment in restoration of wetlands to help filter runoff before it enters the harbour.

3. Accelerate adoption of the NPS-UD, support the District Plan to make such development the easiest of the options, and invest in reallocation of roadspace towards modes that are less polluting for our local, and global, environment.

RACHEL QI

I will be proactive in protecting and enhancing Te Awarua-o-Porirua, its water ecosystem, and will do my best to support the current approach.

Tawa Community Board

MIRIAM MOORE

1. I think the greatest challenge is the multi-jurisdictional catchment of the Porirua Stream, which has resulted in fragmented treatment towards the stream. As we experience more severe weather events I think urgent attention is needed on the stream's resilience - which is difficult to respond to with appropriate timing and cohesion across multiple Councils and communities.

2. I consider immediate priorities would be to improve the riparian margins by planting and maintaining appropriate vegetation. This would have several benefits including reducing direct inputs into the river through overland flow; improving water quality and stabilising banks. Long term, I would like to see a strategic plan prepared with the community that identifies how the mauri will be restored - including progressively improving water quality and reducing flooding. If possible, this may include a long-term-plan of restoring the stream's natural alignment.

3. Closely oversee resource consenting documents as Tawa intensifies under the District Plan and advocate for Council's staunch assessment of stormwater discharging and achieving hydraulic neutrality (through water sensitive urban design) - this will be important in Tawa. Further I will look to see how we can better support our local community groups who do planting and care for our awa, and advocate for a long-term strategy that has the community's vision at the heart of it.