

Local Body Elections Greater Wellington Regional Council 2025

The Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour and Catchments Community Trust, Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet and The Friends of Taupō Swamp and Catchment surveyed candidates for the roles of councillors in the Tawa-Porirua General Ward and Te Upoko o te ika a Māui Māori. Candidates were asked the following three questions:

1. What do you see as the challenges facing the Harbour and its catchments?
2. What will you do about these challenges if you are elected?
3. What priorities do you see for the recently agreed Porirua Harbour Accord and for its signatories in meeting and resolving these challenges?

The responses from candidates who replied to the survey are reproduced below in full (in the order which they were received):

Tawa-Porirua General Ward

Claire Johnstone

1. What do you see as the challenges facing the Harbour and its catchments?

- The biggest challenges are failures in compliance, accountability, and unchecked development.
- Transmission Gully: I supported the project as a vital route into Wellington, but poor enforcement of consent conditions has harmed our harbour. Despite legal action in 2023, it's still unclear who is responsible for the environmental breaches, or who will fix them.
- Urban Development: Developments are increasingly built in flood-prone, unstable areas, many within catchments that affect Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour. Poor planning risks long-term environmental damage. The silting of Pāuatahanui Inlet is visibly worse than 20 years ago. Developers must be held accountable. My husband and I objected strongly to the Duck Creek development but to no avail – and while I acknowledge that with community pressure improvements were made, I still believe there are issues with increased sedimentation and the flood risks are still there. I think these sorts of developments should be avoided. Climate change increases the risks.
- Wastewater failures: Repeated breaches at the Porirua Wastewater Treatment Plant, unlawful overflows, and pollution from networks like Titahi Bay show the current system and enforcement isn't working.

2. What would you do about these challenges if you are elected?

- I support sensible development — especially when it contributes to building our economy. But that development must be matched by strong environmental consent performance clauses in contracts and consents, with real consequences for non-compliance. I will advocate for independent oversight, transparent reporting, and enforcement action where needed, including abatement notices. We have to reduce the sediment run off from Transmission Gully and developments.

- The GWRC needs to take a more proactive approach that prioritises resilience, environmental integrity, and community safety over short-term growth. It needs to use its voice over some of these urban developments – it has legislative responsibilities, and I will be asking we use them.
- It isn't acceptable for sewage to be pumped into our harbour – our food basket. The Regional Council regulates wastewater discharge through resource consents. We need to hold operators accountable for breaches, require infrastructure upgrades, and monitor environmental impacts.
- I would like to see the Protected area/'wetland of the Pāuatahanui inlet increased and effort made to find a way to fund this. I think protection of this area is core business and I will champion stronger protection for this fragile ecosystem.

3. What priorities do you see for the recently agreed Porirua Harbour Accord and for its signatories in meeting and resolving these challenges?

- To strengthen the Porirua Harbour Accord, we must build on its intent through coordinated action. Without this, there is a risk of fragmentation. I remain cautious about Accords like this, as leadership roles are often unclear and there can be lots of talk and minimal action. Clarity is essential to ensure delivery is well-supported across agencies. The iwi-led Mauri Ora framework provides a strong foundation. What's needed now is transparent monitoring and regular public reporting to track progress. Greater Wellington Regional Council has a vital role to play in this, not only as a statutory environmental steward, but also as a convener of cross-agency collaboration and as an advocate for measurable, community-informed outcomes. By aligning development with environmental goals and ensuring accountability, we can accelerate the restoration of the harbour with urgency and shared purpose.

Manaaki whenua, manaaki tāngata, haere whakamua *Care for the land, care for the people, go forward.*

Hikitia Ropata

1. What do you see as the challenges facing the Harbour and its catchments?

- Proposed changes to the RMA including the water entity could result in poorer outcomes for the three-water network across our Porirua Tawa community
- Lack of "joined up" remedial planning, funding for actions to address historical and existing pollution of our harbours and catchments
- The projected growth in the Porirua population and further housing developments to fit that growth, will likely increase sedimentation and pollution within our streams and harbours
- Quality taiao education within our communities is a must.

2. What would you do about these challenges if you are elected?

- Monitor implementation and have ongoing input to GW's mahi around RMA and proposed new water entity.
- As your GW Regional Councillor I would continue to use legislative, regulatory and policy tools that are available to exert more pressure on PCC and GW to address the issues. As the incumbent GW Councillor, we have managed to get GW to monitor the implementation of the actions recommended by the Porirua Whaitua Group since 2018.
- As your GW Regional Councillor I would continue to encourage the collective work of Ngati Toa, PCC, PHA Trustees and other participating community groups to build on the great work of the Porirua Citizens Assembly, the signing of the Porirua Harbour Accord to co-design the solutions

- As your GW Regional Councillor, I would use my elected voice to ensure GW is accountable for how it supports the actions of the Porirua Harbour Accord Trust.

3. What priorities do you see for the recently agreed Porirua Harbour Accord and for its signatories in meeting and resolving these challenges?

- Porirua can't achieve its water, taiao, harbour ambitious on its own. The conversation about the future amalgamation of local councils is a consideration that needs to be openly discussed, debated and resolved. The conversation has to be about our freshwater, stormwater, wastewater and our receiving waterways.
- Build on and strengthen the partnerships with iwi, developers, community and other sectors and encourage joined up conversations about the future design of our communities
- Seek investment in an ongoing "whānau/community voice collection process" across our Porirua Tawa takiwā to provide an evidence base for change and solutions
- Education of our community - it is an "us" problem and we need to make the changes to how we use and collect water, manage our household waste as households, neighbours and communities.

Grenville Gaskell

1. What do you see as the challenges facing the Harbour and its catchments?

Since 2008 a number of excellent reports have been written which document the actions required to restore the Harbour and its catchments. While the current and previous actions of Councils and community organisations have been positive, we know they have not collectively succeeded in averting a continued decline in the health of the Inlet. The planned large scale expansion of urban development and the impact of climate change will make restoration even more challenging.

The key challenge is to agree an integrated strategy and action plan to reduce the rate of sedimentation and pollutants entering the Harbour and its catchments and restore ecological health. Appropriate funding will be needed to implement the Plan along with an effective programme management capability that ensures delivery.

2. What would you do about these challenges if you are elected?

One of my key reasons for seeking election as a Councillor is to make sure GWRC has an appropriate focus on environmental protection and restoration. If elected I would work with fellow Councillors and the leadership team to ensure the Council delivers on its partnership obligations and supports the Porirua Harbour Accord in achieving its vision of the Harbour and Inlet being restored. This would include continuing to support community-based environmental restoration activity.

In a personal capacity I intend remaining an active member of GOPI and supporting its work programme.

3. What priorities do you see for the recently agreed Porirua Harbour Accord and for its signatories in meeting and resolving these challenges?

The Accord offers significant hope of an integrated work programme for restoration being implemented with signatories having agreed an appropriate vision, purpose, objectives and principles.

The priority is to give effect to the Accord by finalising the action plan and timeframes for restoration activities. I would like to see the action plan focus on three key areas:

1. Working with landowners to stabilise erosion prone land and forestry blocks in the Pāuatahanui, Porirua and Horokiri catchments to reduce the highest current annual sediment loads entering the Inlet.
2. Development of communication programmes that inform the community of the national significance and importance of the Inlet and actions households and businesses can take to reduce sedimentation and pollutants entering Harbour and Inlet with a particular focus on high-risk businesses involved in development and construction activities.
3. Implementation of the proposed changes to the Natural Resources Plan to improve Inlet and Harbour environmental protections.

Daniel Hicks

1. What do you see as the challenges facing the Harbour and its catchments?

Te Awarua o Porirua is a national treasure, but its health has been seriously degraded by decades of human activity. The biggest challenges are:

- Excessive sedimentation from urban development, earthworks, and erosion, smothering habitats like seagrass meadows and shellfish beds.
- Pollution from stormwater, wastewater overflows, and contaminants such as heavy metals and nutrients.
- Loss of biodiversity, which affects Ngāti Toa Rangatira's ability to gather safe and sustainable mahinga kai.
- Ageing infrastructure that cannot cope with heavy rainfall events, increasing contaminant loads.
- Climate change pressures that compound sediment, flooding, and water quality problems.

These challenges are well known — the question now is whether the actions promised in *Te Wai Ora o Parirua – Porirua Harbour Accord* are being delivered with the urgency and scale required.

2. What would you do about these challenges if you are elected?

If elected to Greater Wellington Regional Council, I will work to ensure that the commitments in the Accord are implemented with urgency, transparency, and measurable results. This includes:

- Reducing sediment and pollution by strengthening earthworks controls, restoring wetlands and streambanks, and upgrading stormwater and wastewater systems.
- Ensuring accountability by tracking progress through the Accord's Performance Monitoring Framework and requiring regular public reporting.
- Measuring every action so the public can see results and know that investment is not wasted.

- Embedding kaitiakitanga by upholding mana whenua leadership and incorporating the iwi-led *mauri ora* approach alongside scientific monitoring.
- Supporting community involvement by resourcing local groups to plant, restore, and monitor the harbour.
- Building climate resilience into all harbour and catchment planning.

The operational delivery of this work sits with GWRC staff — likely already assigned to the harbour restoration workstream — but as a councillor I would have the mandate to request updates, question progress in council meetings, and ensure that budgets and plans align with the Accord's objectives.

3. What priorities do you see for the recently agreed Porirua Harbour Accord and for its signatories in meeting and resolving these challenges?

The Accord, signed on 6 February 2025, required all signatories to agree on timeframes and priorities for implementation **within six months** — meaning by early August 2025. That deadline has now passed.

The Greater Wellington Regional Council signatories — **Chair Daran Ponter and Chief Executive Nigel Corry** — are directly answerable for meeting this commitment. According to GWRC's Annual Plan 2025/26, the harbour restoration workstream remains funded and active, meaning resources should already be in place to deliver on the Accord.

Moving forward I think the focus should be on:

- Immediate public release of the six-month implementation plan, with clear timelines, responsibilities, and funding commitments.
- Full resourcing and delivery of annual work programmes to achieve measurable, visible improvements in harbour health.
- Alignment of all partner actions so regulation, infrastructure, and restoration work are pulling in the same direction.
- Embedding the iwi-led *mauri ora* approach alongside scientific monitoring to restore both cultural and ecological health.
- Maintaining transparency through annual public reporting on progress, challenges, and next steps.
- Proving the transformation with data, so the community can see that investment is delivering genuine results.

I encourage constituents to also direct this question — about the overdue six-month milestone — to the Greater Wellington Regional Council signatories, **Chair Daran Ponter and Chief Executive Nigel Corry**, who are directly answerable for meeting this commitment. If I am elected, I will formally follow this up within council, request an update from the staff assigned to this work, and ensure the answer is made public.

Te Upoko o te ika a Māui Māori (Single candidate elected unopposed)
