



## MAYORAL COLUMN

### ANNUAL PLAN CONSULTATION

It has been great to catch up with those who came to see us across the district as part of the Annual Plan process. We have been very transparent about how challenging it is to make ends meet, for us and many other Councils nationwide. The high average proposed rate increases across New Zealand demonstrate that Central Government needs to step up and support local councils, so the burden does not fall on ratepayers.

We are tremendously grateful to QRS and its planned increased contribution, which will see Wairoa's average proposed increase sitting at less than 10 per cent rather than the original 15.4 per cent we were forecasting.

It is important to remember that our original forecast was based on unprecedented rising costs, increasing inflation and the impact of severe weather events in 2022, followed by the devastation of Cyclone Gabrielle earlier this year. These costs remain but will be offset by the QRS contribution.

QRS is a Council Controlled Trading Organisation (CCTO) with the Wairoa District Council as the sole shareholder. As a CCTO, QRS operates to make a profit so contributions can be channelled back to the Council and, therefore, our community.

The proposed \$1.05 million contribution is a record dividend demonstrating QRS's commitment to the Wairoa community. During Cyclone Gabrielle, we saw the benefits of a locally based contracting company with infrastructure and specialised staff on the ground. Now our entire community will benefit through this intended increased distribution which is a credit to the QRS board, management and staff.

Following our community engagement, elected members will consider community feedback before finalising the 2023/24 Annual Plan.

For the full Wairoa District Council 2023/24 Annual Plan Engagement Document, please go to <https://www.consultations.nz/wdc/annual-plan-engagement/>

### I AM ALWAYS AVAILABLE

It has been a hectic time lately, but I remain available to catch up with all community members. Sometimes I am hard to track down, but please persevere. I try and make myself available for local one-on-one appointments on Wednesdays. To make a booking, please phone 06 838 7309 and ask to make an appointment to see me.

### LAND CATEGORIES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS UNDERWAY

The local community engagement process for people impacted by the Government's Land Categorisation following Cyclone Gabrielle is underway.

An independent review of the provisional land categorisation data is complete, with the provisional data now assured following a robust independent review process.

Most of Wairoa's North Clyde residential area and along the Frasertown Road remains provisionally categorised as 2A with small pockets of 2P category land near Frasertown. Some previous categorisations have been removed. All property categorisations are provisional until the engagement process has been completed.

Wairoa has been identified as a priority for flood mitigation investment. By categorising most of the flood-affected areas of Wairoa township as 2A, a full range of mitigation approaches can be explored. Wairoa's flood risk relates

to the lower area of the Wairoa River where the town is located, as the awa looks to 'cut off' a loop in the river just to the northwest of the town when in flood, running through North Clyde as it finds its way back to the river, creating a flood risk to the other side, i.e. the township and surrounding area.

The Hawke's Bay Regional Council and its predecessor Catchment Board have considered flood protection options for Wairoa in the past, focussing on the formation of secondary flow paths and/or stop-banking to protect the town. I will be interested to see what options could be implemented to prevent this level of flooding event from reoccurring. I believe that in the first instance, we need to do more work around the actual cause of the flooding to ensure the appropriate measures are taken.

### MAYORAL RELIEF FUND

So far, more than \$600,000 has been distributed to local people who have applied for funding through the Wairoa Mayoral Relief Fund.

Our focus has been on those people whose houses have been stickered. We look forward to continuing with the distributions to help people impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle.

Applications can be made by scanning the QR Code or via the following link: <https://www.wairoadc.govt.nz/our-council/>



### FORESTRY REPORT

Cyclone Gabrielle devastated the East Coast, but the disaster was compounded by debris from forestry harvesting. I am disappointed that the Ministerial Inquiry into land use in Tairāwhiti and Wairoa did not focus more on Wairoa. In fact, from our perspective, it was under-whelming, and I hope more work is completed on the impacts of blanket forestry on our district.

Based on local knowledge, a significant contributor to the Cyclone Gabrielle North Clyde flooding was the debris/slash, which built up like a beaver dam across the river at the Wairoa railway bridge. When this 'dam' was eventually forced open by the pressure of the flood water behind it, the river moved rapidly and in waves and is why the flooding occurred so quickly.

The Ministerial Inquiry has recommended that Regional Councils take a greater role in proactively managing river clearances to prevent infrastructure build-ups and subsequent failure and associated stop bank overtopping.

The report focussed on the East Coast north of Wairoa and found that the political choices made over decades about land use by previous governments have had devastating long-term negative impacts on the people and lands of the East Coast and that the mismatch of land use with land type had dire impacts on local communities.

It found that Hawke's Bay Regional Council (HBRC) was generally compliant in managing land use activities from an environmental perspective. However, it is all very well to have the tools in the toolbox; they still need to be used correctly to be effective.

The report did not recognise the National Environmental Standards for Plantation Forestry (NES-PF) which provides nationally consistent regulations to manage the environmental effects of forestry and restricts Councils'

abilities to make rules in plans. It also did not suggest that increased funding for monitoring, compliance and enforcement be provided to local government.

The report goes some way in addressing the concerns we have been expressing for years. If adopted by the Government, the recommendations will make a difference in future debris-related damage but will require financial support and legislative changes to be effective.

### CYCLONE GABRIELLE COSTS

Per capita, Wairoa was the most severely affected by Cyclone Gabrielle out of the whole of Hawke's Bay - based on stickered houses in relation to our population. On top of that, we were cut off from the south with the closure of State Highway 2 for three months.

We need more support from Central Government, and this is something I am pursuing. We need money and resources to get our town and district back up and running again. The government keeps talking about co-funding, but that is not an option for Wairoa. We need the government to base its decisions on our unique and individual needs, not a one-size-fits-all blanket approach.

I understand that a multi-council agreement has set aside about \$9m of support funding for Wairoa. To date, Council has paid out \$8m in Cyclone Gabrielle expenses for contractors for silt and flood-damaged property removal and cyclone-related roading and bridge work. We have around another \$5m worth of costs sitting in the books. Silt removal alone could reach around \$9m, plus additional costs associated with landfill and Government ETS levies. What we do today is the legacy we leave for our future generations. It is so important that we get it right, and we need more help to do so.

## FOR YOUR DIARY PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

### Finance, Assurance and Risk Committee

Tuesday, June 27 1.30pm

### Council meeting

Tuesday, July 4 1.30pm

### Strategy, Wellbeing and Economic Development Committee

Tuesday, July 11 1.30pm

## CONTACT US

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