

MAYORAL COLUMN

THREE WATERS

As a result of Central Government's Three Waters (drinking water, wastewater, stormwater) review and reform, Wairoa has been working collaboratively at a regional level with the other Hawke's Bay Councils.

We have all heard a lot about Three Waters recently and must not forget that this review was triggered by the Havelock North water contamination and subsequent deaths.



Mayor Craig Little

This week we received the independent Hawke's Bay Three Waters Review report, which includes an examination of the extent and condition of all Three Waters related assets in Hawke's Bay.

Hawke's Bay has also received funding from the Government's national Three Waters investment funding package, of which \$50 million was set aside for Hawke's Bay's four local authorities. The Hawke's Bay's allocation included \$20 million in recognition for the collaborative regional approach.

The Wairoa District Council's portion of that funding is \$11.04 million for Three Waters work.

The independent review of Hawke's Bay's Three Waters states that making no changes to the way our three waters services are delivered is not affordable or sustainable and meeting the new regulations will pose significant affordability challenges for our region, and in particular our smaller councils, such as Wairoa.

This is not unlike the 2015 Hawke's Bay amalgamation debate where similar arguments were used by those in favour of amalgamation, particularly around service delivery and spiralling costs.

These arguments never actually came to fruition, and in fact, Hawke's Bay has worked together and more collaboratively since the Hawke's Bay amalgamation vote was thrown out.

Moving forward our community needs to make a decision on if it wants a regionally placed combined Hawke's Bay Three Waters asset that, we are told, will save a lot of money.

In Wairoa's case we are considerably more isolated from the other Councils and while combining and centralising might save costs, we could also lose our autonomy and perhaps our level of services. Bigger is not always better.

Will we still be able to retain our professional and specialised staff? and what happens if there is a regional event or disaster? will Wairoa be serviced and looked after at the same time as the rest of the region? What will happen if State Highway 2 is closed? - as we have seen happen on many occasions.

Centralisation could mean a loss of independence, and if we lose water what's next, roading?

WE NEED TO ENSURE OUR SERVICE LEVELS, EXPERTISE AND STAFFING ARE NOT COMPROMISED.

Wairoa is different to the rest of Hawke's Bay and there is a large geographical divide that makes connectivity very difficult.

My concern is that Central Government is putting a lot of pressure on Councils throughout the country by pushing the Three Waters reform and telling us status quo is not an option.

In the last couple of years, we have put a lot of effort and investment into upgrading our Three Waters networks. In Wairoa we are fortunate as we don't have a problem with our drinking water because our water source, from the Wairoa River, means our river is regularly tested. Again, this is a case where Wairoa does not fall into the one size fits all category.

We have to ensure Wairoa has a voice and while money plays a part, it is vital Wairoa's level of service is not compromised.

In this pre-election period, I urge Wairoa locals to talk to candidates and hear their views on the situation.

CONNECTIVITY IS KEY

Wairoa is one of largest geographical districts in the country with an area of 4,118 square km.

Our roading network covers 875km of roads and 175 Bridges including 40 large culverts.

WE ARE A VERY BEAUTIFUL AREA AND FEATURE MASSIVE CONTRASTS FROM OUR MAHIA BEACHES TO THE HOT SPRINGS OF MORERE TO THE REMOTE BEAUTY OF WAIKAREMOANA.

I have driven most of our back rural roads and on a recent journey was reminded about what a great job our Council engineering team do to ensure the network is meeting the national specifications.

Our engineering team is responsible for the management of Council assets which total more than \$274 million.

This team oversees the maintenance of roads and bridges that are vital to many of our smaller communities, and in some cases a lifeline for our rural people.

It is a huge job, and the magnitude of even just ensuring the maintenance, let alone improvements, is hard to fathom unless you actually get out and about and drive around our district.

This is a credit to the contractors who carry out the specified work to keep our roads maintained and open.

With a bit of spring in the air and warmer days I encourage local people to make the most of what is on our doorstep.

Drive up the Ruakituri and go for a trout fish. Have a picnic at the Putere Domain or swim in one of our popular river holes, just to name a few destinations within our district.

I know when I am driving these country roads, I always think about the challenging work that goes on behind the scenes to keep our district connected.

MAYORAL MORNING TEA

Unfortunately, the date for our annual community kaumātua morning tea is currently hanging in limbo.

We had planned to hold this event at the beginning of next month but due to COVID-19 alert level restrictions have postponed the gathering until we are moved into Alert Level 1.

Every year we look forward to this event and catching up with familiar faces, and while it is disappointing that the event has been placed on hold, it is also the safest approach and best way to protect our kaumātua.

As soon as we are able to run this event, we will let you know.

THANKS AGAIN

THANKS AGAIN TO THOSE FARMERS WHO DONATED SHEEP, AND OR MONEY, DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN PERIOD.

I have written to personally thank you, but acknowledge it was a difficult time and we were responding to a national crisis, so if I have inadvertently failed to acknowledge any donation please accept this as a personal thank you.

The donated meat went to the Wairoa Welfare Food Hub and was distributed to people who had been identified as being in need during the lockdown period.

I helped with the deliveries and the donations really did make a difference, particularly to our elderly people who were able to stay home and did not have to go out or to the supermarket and could remain safely at home and looked after.

We did have some sheep that were donated after the original processing. These have since been processed and the money from them will be shared between the Welfare Food Hub and the locally run Kai Cupboard.

FOR YOUR DIARY

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Tue, 15 September: 1.30pm

FINANCE, AUDIT & COMMITTEE

Tue, 29 September: 1.30pm

COUNCIL FORUM

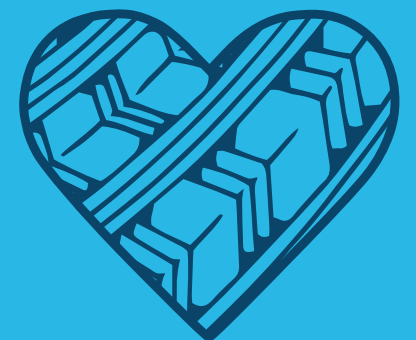
Tue, 6 October: 1.30pm



CONTACT US

Wairoa District Council
Queen St, Wairoa
info@wairoadc.govt.nz
(06) 838 7309

TAUTOKO WAIROA BUY LOCAL



Spend \$30 or more at a local shop and be in for a chance to win one of seven \$100 vouchers.

Winners will be drawn weekly over the next five weeks.

Winners are announced each Friday.

Sponsored by

**The Wairoa Star
Bradbury Jewellers**