

## MAYORAL COLUMN

### FOCUS ON FORESTRY

Over the last year or so there has been a lot of excitement and buzz around the Central Government funding that Wairoa has received, which has been fantastic.

However, the elephant in the room for our district is the expansion of forestry.

Blanket forest planting on our productive farmland is a massive concern and, for me, preventing this from occurring is a priority.

Wholesale forestry planting poses a real risk to rural communities like

Government to recognise that.

If this occurs farmers will need to step up and start planting riparian strips in recognition of the carbon benefits and positive environmental spin offs, hopefully.

### FARMERS SHOULD ALSO BE AWARE THEY CAN GET FUNDING FOR REGENERATION THROUGH THE ONE BILLION TREES PROGRAMME.

Last week, with Government assistance, Wairoa hosted members of Te Uru Rākau (Forestry New Zealand) and the Ministry for the Environment, along with regional stakeholder representatives to discuss our concerns and issues around forestry.

The two-day visit included a field trip visiting farmland which had recently sold to forestry and a recent harvest site and capturing a feel for our district, its terrain and landscape.

There are a lot of unknowns and last week's visit was a proactive start to working together to solve our district's concerns.

The Wairoa District Council is currently reviewing its District Plan and will be working with the Hawke's Bay Regional Council on this.

We appreciate that Te Uru Rākau (Forestry New Zealand) has committed to assist Wairoa.

It was great to see staff travel from Wellington and experience our district first-hand, and see our landscape, rather than making decisions from afar like previous Governments have.

I believe with meaningful collaboration between Te Uru Rākau, the Ministry of Environment, the Hawke's Bay Regional Council and Wairoa District Council we will hopefully be able to achieve an outcome that helps Wairoa while realising we don't have a lot of time on our side.

If we can achieve our goals this will be breakthrough stuff, Wairoa is pioneering change and I look forward to the positive outcomes.

This is a community-wide problem and I urge you to get involved, we can't do this alone.

### WE'RE RACING

The Wairoa Race Meeting will be held on February 20 and 23.

Last year there was a very real threat we would lose our two-day carnival meeting.

Strong community and industry support and recognising Wairoa's geographical isolation were key factors in keeping the country race meeting going.

The New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing had earmarked Wairoa, and nine other tracks, for closure proposing that Wairoa race at Gisborne from 2019/20 onwards.

The Wairoa Racing Club, with support from the Wairoa District Council, demonstrated that it had a strong community and wider industry support and managed to avoid being shut down.

The Wairoa club still has work to do to satisfy the requirements of the New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing and the future of the Wairoa Club will be reconsidered after the 2023/24 season.

I know the committee and volunteers have been working hard to prepare for this year's meeting and have had to put in a lot of extra effort to clean up from the pre-Christmas storm event. The site was really hammered with a lot of trees down and damage caused, and I take my hat off to the resilience and hard work of the team.

### THE RACES ARE A BIG PART OF OUR COMMUNITY. THE MEETING BOOSTS OUR ECONOMY WITH POSITIVE SPIN-OFFS AND IS A PICNIC CARNIVAL FOR LOCALS AND VISITORS.

It is important our community supports the races. It is all about use it or lose it. I hope as many people as possible are able to attend the two-day meeting.

I wish the hardworking committee and volunteers all the best for a great couple of days.



Mayor Craig Little

Wairoa.

More forestry planting threatens our sheep and beef industry, our local economy and the district's largest employer, the AFFCO meat processing plant.

History has demonstrated forestry has not grown the economy of the Wairoa district. We've seen it happen before, the results for a rural community like Wairoa were devastating.

Research on Wairoa, released last August by Beef and Lamb New Zealand, shows that 8,486 hectares (although we know there has been more since then) of sheep and beef farmland was, or was in the process of being, converted to forestry, and showed forestry provided fewer jobs in rural communities than sheep and beef farms.

The report, Social-economic impacts of large-scale afforestation on rural communities in the Wairoa District, illustrated that further conversion of beef and lamb farms to forestry would result in hundreds of less jobs in the agricultural sector, a loss of millions of dollars and negative results for the economy.

Basically, Wairoa as we know it now would not exist.

Forestry is not all bad, but it needs to be balanced. There are some positive spinoffs for Wairoa such as some local forestry contractors and East Coast Lumber which processes logs in Wairoa, exports timber products and employs local people. I commend the work of Mike Pollock and the added value he brings to our community.

It would be great to see more primary industry spin offs like this happening locally

### I HAVE BEEN CAMPAIGNING AGAINST BLANKET FORESTRY PLANTING AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR YEARS.

Through the One Billion Trees Programme the Government's goal is to double the current planting rate to reach one billion trees planted by 2028.

While this programme has the potential to deliver benefits for our environment, our people, our communities, and our economy, the focus needs to be on the right tree, in the right place, for the right purpose.

Looking at this nationally it appears to be a gradual redistribution of land use, but unfortunately the areas in New Zealand that need trees aren't being planted and Wairoa is getting the brunt of it.

In our district over the last year or so we have seen more than 9000 hectares of large scale radiata pine plantations. That's around seven percent of productive farmland going into afforestation.

The One Billion Trees Programme is not the main driver that is causing the land use swap from farming to forestry.

A catalyst is speculative investors, operating outside the One Billion Trees Programme, who believe carbon credits will increase dramatically and will be a major trading currency of the future.

It is important Central Government listens and is aware of the consequences of blanket planting - which includes the potential to destroy rural communities.

At the moment, natural regrowth and riparian planting is not captured by the Emission Trading Scheme so we are pushing the

## FOR YOUR DIARY

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Tue, 18 February: 1.30pm

### FINANCE, AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

Tue, 3 March: 1.30pm

### INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Tue, 17 March: 1.30pm



### CONTACT US

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

## TOTAL FIRE BAN HAWKE'S BAY

This fire ban includes all of the Wairoa District and Wairoa township.

All fires in the open air are prohibited including incinerators and braziers. Gas barbecues or heaters are still permitted.

