

MAYORAL COLUMN

THREE WATERS REFORM SURVEY

I am continually told by our community and iwi that they have not heard enough information around the government's proposal to reform the drinking, waste and storm water (three waters) sector.

They are telling me they cannot understand how the proposal has progressed to the stage it has when they have not personally received any information about the changes.



Mayor Craig Little

While this is a government reform, the Wairoa District Council, along with other local authorities, has been asked by the government to consider the evidence and whether the government's proposal to reform the water sector will deliver benefits to its residents.

The government has given all councils until 30 September 2021 to analyse the proposal and feed back to them.

Our Council has designed a survey as a way of gathering people's thoughts. We urge you to complete the survey and add any additional comments you may want to share.

I don't believe the government has put out enough information around this radical change. If this proposal goes through it will have a massive impact on council, community and iwi, and I find it farcical that the government is not talking to individual communities as the decisions will affect these communities for many more years to come.

We really need to hear from our community and iwi as it is important the information our Council feeds back to the government is reflective of our people.

The proposal comprises significant change and also leaves a lot of unanswered questions.

While I agree we need to make changes in the Three Waters sector, I don't believe amalgamating the water services of the 67 local authorities into four new regional statutory corporations, with centralised management and a new governance structure, is the answer.

I do accept that providing Three Waters services into the future could become very expensive with changes in the regulatory environment, infrastructure, growth, and climate change.

My concern is, under this proposal will Wairoa still have a voice, or will we lose our localisation, and will we still own our assets? The government proposes to amalgamate the water services of the Wairoa District Council into a new statutory corporation called 'Entity C' which will see Wairoa included along with the East Coast, the rest of Hawke's Bay, down to Wellington, and the top of the South Island. This area covers close to one million people and 21 councils - Wairoa would make up one percent of the combined local councils in the entity.

The key question is, will the Reform Scenario deliver the claimed benefits, and will Wairoa be better off under the proposed scenario? Hawke's Bay's councils have collectively discussed the impacts of becoming part of Entity C and are investigating options including developing a regional approach.

By gathering the thoughts of our community and iwi we will be able to clearly state what is important to our community in terms of the balance between retaining a local voice in decision-making and ensuring sustainable, affordable, reliable, and safe water services in the future.

To share your feedback with us, please visit www.consultations.nz/wdc or email feedback@wairoadc.govt.nz. We really need your thoughts so our Council can make sure we are doing what our community and iwi want. The survey will close on Monday.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

I would like to make a big shout out to the Queen Street Practice and Kahungunu Executive and support organisations like Taiwhenua and Te Whare Maire which are all involved in the vaccine process.

As we all know, COVID-19 has tipped the world as we knew it upside down. Experts and health professionals tell us the only way we can avoid more lockdowns is to have more people vaccinated.

I personally support the vaccination process, my wife Jan and I have both been vaccinated, we have done that for ourselves and for our community.

I admire the work of all our vaccinating crews who are working to cover our entire community to ensure everyone has the opportunity to be vaccinated. Thank you for all your hard work.

HEAVY RAINFALL EVENT

Last week's heavy rainfall event was certainly what most farmers wanted to set their stock feed situation up for the coming months.

In town there were reports of more than 100mm falling within a 48-hour period.

This put a lot of pressure on Council's infrastructure and particularly our stormwater and wastewater network.

A main issue for us was the storm water infiltration into our wastewater network. We have made significant improvements around this area over the last couple of years but there is still work to do.

Some of the projects we are currently carrying out through the \$11m Three Waters stimulus package will continue to build our resilience. These include the water toby upgrade with backflow prevention devices and electronic water meters, CCTV filming of the inside of wastewater pipes, wastewater pipe relining, and wastewater treatment plant improvements including dedicated pump station generators.

The heavy rainfall also caused a few localised slips and one road closure due to flooding, but predominantly our roading network held up well considering how much rain fell in a short timeframe.

TAUTOKO WAIROA & SHOP AND BUY LOCALLY

With spring in the air and longer sunnier days it is great to look around our town and see vibrancy and enthusiasm.

There is a real hum on our main street, and I know the buzz will only increase as the Te Wairoa E Whanake project is rolled out with physical work underway on revitalising the burned-out buildings on the main street.

In Wairoa we are an isolated community, and we rely on the services that our local businesses provide. But we need to support these businesses so that they can remain trading in order to provide the services we need.

Many Wairoa businesses stepped up with a proactive response during the Alert Level 4 and 3 lockdowns.

They were there when we needed them. It is important now, even though we are not under the same restrictions, that we are supporting these businesses.

Lockdown had financial implications on our business community, and it is up to us to support our local businesspeople so they can continue to support us.

If we do not look after our businesses, we run a very real risk that they may not survive, and we could lose the convenience of having their products or services available locally which would have a massive impact on our community.

Tautoko Wairoa- shop and buy locally.

FOR YOUR DIARY

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

MATANGIRAU RESERVES BOARD

Mon, 27 September: 3.30pm

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

to present Council's feedback on the Government's Three Waters Reform Proposal

Tue, 28 September: 10 am

FINANCE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

Tues, 28 September: 1.30pm

COUNCIL FORUM

Tues, 5 October: 1.30pm

If you would like to present at Council Forum, please make a request by emailing governance@wairoadc.govt.nz or call into the Council offices and ask for a Council Forum application form. The agenda closes on September 27.

Under Level 2 all meetings will be held by video conference, the link will be available on Council's website.



CONTACT US

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

CHECK BEFORE YOU DIG OR EXCAVATE



Don't compromise Wairoa's utilities. Know what is underground before you dig.

Check by using our online maps or call the Wairoa District Council on 06 838 7309.