

## HONoured TO BE RE-ELECTED



Mayor Craig Little

I feel honoured to have been re-elected as Mayor of Wairoa, and I know my fellow elected members also feel honoured to have been voted in. I am passionate about our district and feel reinvigorated to continue to grow all of Wairoa. Thank you to all those people who supported me and the other successfully elected members in this election. At the beginning of the campaign, I stated I was re-standing because so many people had asked me to. It is humbling that those people walked their talk by voting for me and I am extremely grateful.

The pre-election and campaigning period is always challenging and there are times when I wondered why I was putting myself through the stress. The negative, derogatory and unfactual comments, admittedly only put out by a few people and obviously not believable, is simply not the Wairoa way. It does impact on candidates, their families, friends and staff of the Wairoa District Council. Hiding behind a keyboard is not the way we do things and I encourage anyone who has something to say to meet with me and have a discussion.

I am pleased we can now move forward with certainty, and I look forward to leaving the negativity and misinformation behind. I would also hope we can move forward positively without the Council having to continually defend itself. The Wairoa District Council is open and transparent and our independent audit process, and our boldness in being part of the Local Government Excellence Programme and Performance Assessment Programme are testimony to this. Council is always happy to answer genuine queries.

The previous Council term was incredibly hard with COVID-19 having a huge impact on Council's functions and costs. I am looking forward to entering a new phase and the election results have demonstrated the community has confidence Council is on the right track.

It is great to have the familiar faces of incumbent councillors Denise Eaglesome-Karekare, Jeremy Harker, Chaans Tumataroa-Clarke and Melissa Kaimoana at the table. It is also great to welcome newly elected members Benita Cairns and Roz Thomas. I know both Benita and Roz have considerable experience and knowledge to share for the betterment of our district.

It is sad to farewell former councillors Hine Flood, who was also the Deputy Mayor, and Danika Goldsack. They have both had a tremendous input during their time as elected members and I know they will continue to tirelessly work for our district - as they have in the past.

I would also like to thank all those people who took the time out to vote and have their say. Wairoa's final voter return was 53.2%, above the national average, and higher than the 2019 election of 51.4%. It would be great to have an even higher voter return in the future and that is something Local Government across the country needs to work towards.

As we begin this next stage, I want to reassure our community that we are confident about Wairoa's future. We have projects and goals in front of us that I look forward to seeing completed, and that will help our growing population continue to thrive in Wairoa - the district we know and love.

However, as stated during my campaign we also have challenges ahead of us, including escalating costs and inflation (cost of living crisis) and possible external funding shortfalls; Government Reforms of the Three Waters, RMA and Local Government; the Government's drive on centralisation versus localism; changes to our weather patterns which puts massive pressure on our infrastructure, particularly roading; losing productive farmland to forestry, particularly carbon forestry; farm-level emissions pricing proposal, a housing shortage, and the continual costs put on Councils and businesses by Central Government - which is not

realistic or sustainable.

We need to respond by continuing to work at a high level and advocating and lobbying Central Government on behalf of our district.

I will continue to make myself as available as possible and am always keen for a chat and to hear other people's views, opinions and ideas.

## FARM-LEVEL EMISSIONS PRICING

It astounds me that the Government is not listening to New Zealanders and is pushing on with its radical transformations around big-ticket items such as the Three Waters Reform proposal, Local Government Reform and climate change policies. The government's farm-level emissions pricing proposal will have farmers paying levies on emissions from 2025. The price will be set by Cabinet based on advice from the Climate Change Commission and some input from the sector.

This latest announcement is another nail in the coffin for farmers and for rural towns. Farmers have had a gutsful and a proposal like this could be the breaking point that forces them to sell their land to forestry, often to off-shore companies.

I am all for methods to help tackle climate change, but not just by targeting one group, namely farmers, who produce food nationally and for our overseas market. I support innovation and leadership - but again not at the expense of our people, particularly our rural communities. We need a fair and equitable approach across all of New Zealand and need to stop focussing on small businesses and instead hold all sectors accountable. The government's proposal is a world first but could result in New Zealand being the poorest country in the world. What is the point of us being green and beautiful when we are destroying our rural communities to achieve that? If we keep planting trees at the rate we are we will have no land left to even be able to feed ourselves, let alone export food products. What's next importing our food from China?

Under this proposal we are told one meat plant will close every year from 2030. That is essentially closing down the equivalent of a small town every year and unfortunately under this proposal Wairoa is right in the firing line.

We need the government to be looking holistically at the implications of its decisions. Imagine what the cost to central government would be if we are left with rural ghost towns across the country?

The Government has become obsessed with pricing methane at the expense of reducing it. This should have been an emissions reduction scheme not an emissions pricing scheme.

We need the government to focus on working with farmers on projects like planting the right trees in the right place to absorb carbon, not be stinging them with a levy. All growing plants offset methane, we need to capture all plantings and celebrate farmers and the work they do, not constantly legislate on farming.

I will be writing to Central government and my hope is that commonsense will prevail, and the government will start listening to the people who elected them to be their representatives.

## TE WAIROA E WHANAKE PROJECT UPDATE

Above-ground work is in full swing at the main street former burnt-out buildings Gemmell's site.

The new build 'annexe' at the rear of the section, will comprise a large steel-framed structure that will be constructed over the next month.

The hospitality pod, the first of three tenanted spaces within the courtyard, is being installed this week.

The community courtyard development will comprise three businesses, including the hospitality pod, with tenancy agreements in the final stages for two of the businesses. A tenant

for the hospitality pod is being sought and a second Expression of Interest round has been launched this week inviting all interested parties to submit an application. The close-off date is Friday, November 25.

Action at the site has well and truly ramped up and will continue to hit key project milestones in the run-up to Christmas.

The community courtyard is set to open in the middle of next year and will provide locals and visitors with a space to relax, socialise, and connect.

The development of the Gemmell's site is currently within budget, although material delays and the availability of local contractors have caused setbacks. Work is ongoing to attract further external funding to help supplement possible cost overruns. Cost-saving reviews across material and product options are also ongoing to ensure the development is fit-for-purpose while being affordable for the Council and the community.

So far, more than \$400,000 of additional funding has been secured to contribute to the cost of the development and more funding applications are in the pipeline.

Hiring local contractors where possible has also been a priority and a key driver behind the project and will continue to be a major focus.

Meanwhile, a design review is currently underway for the former Winter's building, on the corner of the main street and Locke Street, to ensure a suitable facility can be achieved within the available budget. An architectural team has been engaged to design a cost-effective, fit-for-purpose space that will house the relocated Wairoa i-Site. Conceptual designs are currently in progress and targeted to be finalised before the end of the year.

Te Wairoa E Whanake - Rise Up and Grow Wairoa involves transforming the former main street burnt-out building and the neighbouring former Winter's building. The project is predominantly funded through a successful Provincial Growth Fund Application and focusses on a multi-functional connected town centre that celebrates Wairoa's unique heritage and culture.

**The Wairoa Christmas  
Float Parade and  
concert is on Saturday,  
December 10.**

**Please register now by collecting  
your registration form from the  
i-Site or emailing  
rubyanne@wairoadc.co.nz**



### CONTACT US

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