By email

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Mayor Janet Holborrow
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Kia ora Janet

Congratulations again on your election as Mayor of Kāpiti Coast District Council (KCDC). I trust you and your Council will have a productive three years.

As we start the triennium, I wanted to indicate some broad areas of mutual interest where I see our two organisations having more direct engagement and where it will be important to ensure our councils continue are well connected. I'd welcome a conversation on these topics and the opportunity to hear more about your priorities.

As a regional council our specific responsibilities continue to be environment management, flood protection and land management, provision of regional parks, public transport planning and funding, and metropolitan water supply.

In Kāpiti, we need to continue to work together to enhance the district's livability, enable sustainable growth and support a thriving environment, while balancing affordability for our ratepayers.

A key area of focus will be working collaboratively to plan for urban intensification in resilient locations—specifically avoiding areas vulnerable to natural hazards such as flooding, sea level rise, and erosion. This approach will support planning for affordable housing which is integrated with planning for reliable public transport that connects Kāpiti to the wider region and links people to their places of work, study, and recreation.

Regional Planning

Regional spatial planning is facilitated by Wellington Regional Leadership Committee (WRLC).

The work of the WRLC is taking on greater importance with reform of the Resource Management Act (RMA) putting regional spatial planning firmly on the table. Some regions are well advanced in this area and some urban growth partnerships, including WRLC, have already created a future development strategy.

The WRLC secretariat is currently developing a regional spatial ambition that will assist authorities in the region and the government to better plan for growth and reposition the region for future economic development. The regional spatial ambition will support the region, through WRLC, to put forward co-investment proposals with the government. It also has the potential to isolate projects for a regional deal.

Rail

Metlink (Greater Wellington's public transport arm) runs most of the trains across the network. These trains see more than 10 million passenger boardings a year. We look forward to the delivery of 18 five-car battery electric multiple unit trains, which will service the Kāpiti Line. Planning is now underway for this service, including Ōtaki station upgrade and passing loops.

The Tūhono trains will better connect the region and improve travel options for employment, education and healthcare throughout the Lower North Island, reducing road congestion and emissions, and supporting regional growth. We look forward to continuing to work closely with your Council as we bring this vision to life.

Meanwhile, keeping the rail network maintained to a safe and reliable standard is critical. While the network has improved through greater investment in recent years, there is still a need for sustained funding for the renewal and maintenance of the rail network, and advocacy to secure funding.

Removal of rail crossings on the electrified network

KiwiRail has submitted a business case for signalling technology called the European Train Control System (ETCS). This system is designed to safely reduce mandatory gaps between trains which would enable more frequent services (e.g. from one service every 20 mins to one every 10 mins) on the Kāpiti and Hutt Valley lines, in particular.

To complement this work Greater Wellington, through the Regional Transport Committee, will advocate for the development of a business case for the staged removal of rail crossings on the electrified network. This will enhance safety, reduce traffic congestion and increase network efficiency.

Rail Station Upgrades

Greater Wellington Regional Council owns nearly all the train stations on the Metlink network, other than Wellington Railway Station. Some of these stations are a product of their time and are showing their age. Greater Wellington proposes to investigate preparation of a business case for the comprehensive upgrading of rail stations across the network over time as part of ensuring safe and accessible journeys and encouraging more people to use public transport. This may also include propositions for new stations, where a business case, affordability for ratepayers and the cost benefits support such a case. This could have implications for local place making.

Enhancing the natural environment and flood protection

The Kāpiti Coast is well known for its beautiful coastline and natural environment. Greater Wellington administers more than 50,000 ha of regional parks, including in your district Queen Elizabeth Park with its combination of wetlands, sand dunes, and forests. During this triennium we will recommit to replanting Queen Elizabeth Park – a green space for Kāpiti's population to enjoy walking, day-use horse riding, cycling and of course picnicking.

Wainuiwhenua at Paekākāriki — future ownership

We will also continue to advocate for the Government to release land above Paekākāriki for recreation and other purposes. I am keen for us to continue to work together to progress plans for future ownership of the surplus land relating to Transmission Gully. In 2021 and 2023, I wrote to the Ministers of Transport and Land Information advising of our interest in this land, together with mana whenua, and a potential ownership model that would enable us to hold the surplus land. I propose that we work together to push more strongly for an affordable ownership model.

Flood protection and coastal erosion

Managing the flood risk from the Waikanae and Ōtaki rivers, as well as the Waimeha, Mangaone, and Waitohu streams, is an area of focus for us. We are increasingly trying to balance traditional flood protection measures with allowing rivers room to move and follow natural ecosystem processes. We will work closely with KCDC on what this looks like for Kāpiti.

An area I would value your support and collaboration on a joined-up approach to Government on sea level rise and coastal erosion. Our parks network plan – Toitū te Whenua – has identified an area of QEP at the southern end of the park that requires retreat. This will be a significant project involving mana whenua and dune restoration work. This presents an opportunity for local government to lead by example on a sustainable solution to a costal management challenge.

Local Government Reform

Local government reform was signalled last week. Greater Wellington supports reform that engages the community and our mana whenua partners and recognises the benefits of localism, regionalism and Māori representation. We believe there continues to be a strong role for regional councils in areas such as river catchments, flood protection and public transport, which are all best managed at scale. We look forward to working with you on responses to the Government's proposals.

I look forward to working with you and your council, supporting our communities to thrive and prosper now and in the future.

Ngā mihi

Daran Ponter
Haemana | Chair

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