By Email

5 December 2025

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Kia ora Anita

Congratulations again on your election as Mayor of Porirua City Council. 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 are well connected. I welcome a conversation on these topics and an opportunity to hear more about your priorities.

In Porirua, I'd like us to continue to work together to enhance the city's livability, enable 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, as well as areas with ecological value such as the Porirua Stream corridor. This approach will support planning for affordable and resilient housing integrated with reliable public transport that connects Porirua to the wider region and links people to their places of work, study, and recreation.

Regional Planning

As you are aware 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 RMA putting regional spatial planning firmly on the table. Some regions are well advanced in this area, while 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.

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.

Rail safety

A business case has been prepared by KiwiRail for signalling technology called the European Train Control System (ETCS). This system is designed to 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, proposes to 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 all the train stations on the Metlink network, other than Wellington Railway Station. Some stations are showing their age. Greater Wellington proposes to investigate preparing a business case for upgrading 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 include propositions for new stations, or transport-oriented development, where a business case, the cost benefits and affordability for ratepayers support such a case. This could have implications for local place making.

New fare technology

In early November, the Government, through NZTA Waka Kotahi, introduced the first phase of the National Ticketing Solution in Christchurch, and when fully tested will be introduced to the Metlink network. This is planned for 2027. Ahead of that transition, Greater Wellington, will explore customer improvements such as contactless payments, in the next year.

Enhancing the natural environment

Another area of immense cultural, ecological, and community value is Te Awarua o Porirua – Porirua Harbour. Over many decades, the harbour and its catchment have been under pressure from urban growth, sedimentation, pollutants, and the loss of natural habitats. The signing of Te Wai Ora o Parirua – Porirua Harbour Accord (the Accord) was a significant milestone in the journey to restore and protect the health of Te Awarua-o-Porirua. We remain committed to working collaboratively to uphold the Accord's intent and to support initiatives that halt degradation and improve the health of Te Awarua o Porirua and its connected awa.

As indicated at Takapūwāhia Marae recently, I will bring previous work on dredging back to the table, so that the parties to the Harbour Accord can consider the merits and consequences of progressing with dredging.

We need to build on this work by collaborating to create opportunities where urban growth, intensification, and flood management are integrated to help restore and protect our streams and harbour. I am also keen to explore how we could jointly support the community with pest management in the Porirua Basin.

Local Government Reform

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