

Hahei Ratepayers' questions

Len Salt - September 14th 2022

1. **Hahei Reticulated Sewage** – What do you propose doing about it? It continually gets delayed. Are you happy for further development to occur in Hahei with no reticulated sewage system?

I'm doing some homework with council and Community Board to find out the current status on this. More to come once I have the information. I'll be more confident in proving a credible answer to this question once I have the facts.

2. **Three Waters** - If you don't support the proposed Three Waters reform, how do you propose Council pay for sewage and water in Hahei

There are two key points to be considered here.

First is the reality of the current situation. **Second** is the need to carry on with projects that have already been identified in the LTP and get them "shovel ready", either for Council or for the new entity to carry them forward.

The current situation

The newly elected Mayor will be immediately thrown into the process of working with the Chief Executive and staff to manage the transition process that has been set in train by the Three Waters Entities Bill. This Bill is currently in its Select Committee stage, and our current Mayor spoke to the Council submission on the bill on the 16th August. The submission for our council was one of 88,000 submissions received. The Select Committee is made up of members from Labour, National, Act and The Green Party. While Labour has a majority and has the power to force the legislation through, it seems unlikely that they will do so without any changes given that there is significant opposition to parts of the proposed legislation.

Having said that, the wheels are already turning. At the Council meeting on 13th September, the CE reported that they have 12 staff already working on this and an additional \$450,000 in funding has been made available by the government to assist with the costs of this process. Council has already either drawn down, or been approved for, over \$8 million as part of the "no worse off" compensation. 4.8 million has gone to water meters in Whitianga and Whangamata. Another 4.3 million will go to the Kopu marine development. A National Transition Unit (NTU) is already in place to work through these changes and work is being done on software and data systems integration between the 22 councils.

An incoming Mayor will have responsibility for working within the legislative guidelines and requirements set out by Central Government. We do not have the power to "say no to Three Waters". Any reversal of this legislation will be done after the General Election in 2023 at Central Government level. The new government, if there is one, is unlikely to be sitting before the beginning of 2024. Legislation to repeal the Water Entities Bill (or Act as it will be

then) is unlikely to be introduced until well into 2024, by which time the new Entities will be very close to operational.

A new government will not be in a position to “dismantle” all of the structural changes and integrations, the personnel, the data and billing systems, the funding and capex, and all the other changes without the massive costs and disruption involved in putting things back as they were. From a purely practical point of view, it’s hard to see that happening.

Having said that, we still have a voice and it **MUST** be heard on our water requirements. We have unique challenges in the Coromandel. Our 400 kms of coastline, our geographic makeup, our separated communities (in terms of access to infrastructure) make our water, wastewater and stormwater challenges expensive and labour intensive. My analysis is that there needs to be a middle ground, where we as a council have a significant level of influence on priorities, control of our infrastructure, long term funding and a real voice at local level. How this can happen is yet unknown, will be largely decided at central government level, but we still need to keep pushing for what is best for our district.

Being “shovel ready”

Our Whitianga Residents and Ratepayers group was the catalyst for getting a water supply investigation up and running in Whitianga, following the 2019/20 drought. This is under way now, fully funded by Council and Community Board. Regardless of Three Waters changes, we need to continue that work at *local level* to ensure we are “shovel ready” and first out of the starting blocks when funding is available and priorities are decided. It’s taken three years to get the Whitianga study under way. We do not want to be 3 years behind the eight ball when these things are decided, or we’ll end up last in the queue of 21 other councils in Entity B.

3. **Hahei Drinking Water** – Approximately half Hahei properties are provided with non-potable water. Are you concerned? What do you propose to do about it.

Twelve months ago I had a conversation with a Hamilton based bore drilling company who had been asked to drill two bores at Hahei. At the time, they were fully committed on their workload and could not do the job. I’d like to know whether or not that progressed and I have asked the question. There is \$301,000 in the LTP for Hahei Water supply of which \$205,000 is for the 2022/23 financial year. I will need to get an update on the current situation and have made enquiries as to the status of work in progress.

Hahei Village Development – many Hahei residents are concerned about expansion and development of Hahei. What is your position?

The decisions around development of Hahei Village need to start and end with the people of Hahei. Community Board is there to hear your plans and facilitate the process of working those plans into the Long Term Plan and through into the Annual Plan process at Council level. If there is council funding involved, it will be budgeted for and allocated through the LTP process. Community Board and Council staff will be available to meet and discuss with Hahei residents all through this process, both in terms of support but also in terms of ensuring that the plans align with regulatory, planning and infrastructure requirements. Council will also be able to assist with a robust consultation process which again will feed through to the LTP process, which is where the budgeting (if any is required) will take place. As a Mayor,

(and a local Mayor as well) I will be ready, willing and available to meet and discuss ideas at any time, however the vision and decisions need to be driven at street level by your members.

5. Expansion of te Whanganui a Hei Marine Reserve/SeaChange Initiative – Do you support the expansion of marine protected areas as proposed in the SeaChange Program?

The Sea Change Initiative involves significant research and identification of areas that need special attention in order to maintain the health of the marine and coastal environments. There would appear to be a crossover between the work done on this project, and the responsibilities of Waikato Regional Council on areas of responsibility which might have formerly been solely covered under the Fishing Act 1996.

The release by WRC a few weeks ago of maps showing areas of the East Coast was part of a public consultation process, with a series of 4 options.

This is a process that Waikato Regional Council is legally required to undertake. Until recently fishing related activities were managed under the Fishing Act 1996, however recent case law determined that WRC can manage some activities that affect marine biodiversity, such as fishing and the gathering of shellfish and other marine life, in Coastal Plans and under the Resource Management act 1991. Any Councillor elected to WRC will be legally obliged to follow the same process, however as a Thames Coromandel representative it's important that the thoughts of the coastal communities affected are clearly understood by the WRC representative.

The communication with the public around this consultation process, and the mapping of the areas involved, seems to have been poorly managed by the WRC communications team and caused alarm amongst the recreational fishing community. I had a number of discussions with Cr Denis Tegg about this at the time, as did John Grant (CFM) and others. It's my understanding that Cr Tegg passed those concerns on to the WRC staff and CFM published an additional article which helped to clarify the situation.

The informal consultation on that process has now closed. The feedback received has been incorporated into the draft coastal plan which will now be presented for public submissions early in 2023. Regional councillors will now bow out of the process. It's up to the public to make their submissions in 2023 to independent commissioners who will decide on the final plan. WRC Councillors will not be involved in that court process. The important message on this and other coastal issues is this -- *please make a submission when the chance comes around next year.*

As Mayor of TCDC (if elected) it is not an area that I will have direct involvement in, and there will local people who are more informed than I am about the details on this, but will be watching with interest.

On a final note: It will be important is to reinstate and maintain a strong working relationship between TCDC and WRC. That relationship has taken a few hits in recently years based on differing positions around climate change, emissions reduction, public transport and other matters.

Climate Change/Coastal Degradation – We are concerned that properties in Hahei will become uninsurable due to climate change. What is your strategy to mitigate the effects of climate change and who pays?

SMP Pathway for Hahei Beach

This is a very real and valid concern. The SMP programme has been visionary on the part of Council and has set in place many of the tools and information that our communities will need to have to make informed decisions in the future.

I attended all nine of the final round of SMP public meetings. I did this because it is such a wide ranging and complex issue that covers our entire 400km coastline and multiple parts of the district. A new Mayor must arrive at the table with a good understanding of what's involved. There is potentially well over a billion dollars of funding involved if a number of the mitigation options are adopted and it would be irresponsible to be involved in that decision-making process without having done the homework first.

Each part of the coast has a different set of problems, with different triggers and varying degrees of urgency in terms of their timelines involved. Thames, Moanatairi, and Te Puru are potentially at more severe and shorter-term risk of coastal inundation and flooding than other areas, which might have more time to prepare.

The SMP report for Hahei sets out possible timelines, triggers and pathways for action:

“The adaptation strategy for Hahei Beach in the short term is to maintain natural defences through push-ups, planting native dune species and maintaining access.

With climate change this is not expected to be sufficient to limit erosion on its own. Therefore, when 80% of the dune width has been lost (and a recession trend outside the normal erosion and accretion cycle has been demonstrated)/ push-ups and planting are ineffective, soft engineering measures should be implemented at the Western end of the beach: setting the dune back into the reserves and undertaking dune planting.

This will require the car park to be relocated. Measures such as these will require management and potentially continue push-ups planting and even reprofiling over time.

In the medium-term with 0.4 m (estimated 43 years into the future) of sea-level rise, properties along the estuary are predicted to be affected by large storm events. At this point, where possible, properties and associated infrastructure should be raised and planning for retreat is likely to need to occur.

With 0.6 m (estimated 57 years into the future) of sea-level rise, a large number of properties are predicted to be affected during storm events and retreat is likely to be necessary.”
(TCDC SMP Adaptation Pathway report).

The timelines indicated for the 0.4m and 0.6m triggers are estimated to happen at 43 years and 57 years into the future respectively, and are based on an estimated “worst case” scenario RCP value of 8.5. RCP – or Representative Concentration Pathways, indicates the level of global carbon emissions. **However**, as climate change intensity increases and the likelihood of 1% AEP events grows, it will be important to have contingencies in place to prepare for the next steps. The homeowners insurance cover could be affected well before estimated dates. One or more weather or inundation events

could result in reduced cover, or no cover at all. This happened recently to a resident in the Coromandel area, so the potential risk has to be taken seriously.

One result of the extensive research produced as part of the SMP process that stood out very strongly was the effect of “hard options” where they have used to protect coastline and property. In exposed coastal areas it was clear it was an “either or” situation. Where hard options (stone, concrete etc.) had been used, the beach was sacrificed. Aside from the difficult consenting issues, and the high cost involved, in many cases it was a choice of wall or beach, but you couldn’t have both. Construction of a hard barrier resulted in foot scouring and end scouring in many cases. The most successful options seemed to be wide scale dune extensions, planting of coastal resilient natives (which are in short supply at the moment) and in the worst-case scenarios, a long term acceptance of some managed retreat.

None of these options would be pursued without the people of Hahei being involved and consulted at every stage and at every level.

The Council Process

Once the SMP report goes to the new Mayor and Council, the next steps will be worked through and there will be further consultation with affected communities. In areas such as Hahei, where there is a possibility that insurance cover will be affected and, in the longer term, managed retreat becomes the only option for some properties, options will be explored with the government and homeowners together with council. One option discussed during the SMP meetings was a model that has been adopted elsewhere. If a homeowner accepts that their home will be lost in the future, but wants to enjoy continued (and safe) occupation for a limited number of years, then a buy and leaseback arrangement might be an option that could get council or government support (or both). There are existing examples of this model that can be explored for local application.

There is a lot more work and discussion with affected communities that needs to take place, but we are three years ahead of the problem thanks to some foresight on the part of our current council. This is an issue on a national and global scale, and Council will be working closely with the Government and WRC to provide the best possible solutions.

Limiting Emissions

At a local level, TCDC has to play our part in making a contribution to limiting emissions. We will have little effect on a global scale compared to countries like India, where using coal for energy generation is still a major problem. But that’s no excuse for inaction.

One of my first priorities will be to expand the current Sustainability and Resilience Working Group, and expand its remit and resources with specific objectives. These will include:

- Fleet transition from Fossil fuels to hybrid/electric.
- Solar panels on Council and contractor plant and buildings (Water and wastewater treatment plants, refuse transfer stations, offices and storage units).
- Charging stations for EV’s
- Public transport options

Much of this has already been researched and numerous viable options are already available. Net zero cost to ratepayers will be a top priority and there are significant funding streams available for initiatives which lower emissions.

This working group has been in existence at Council for some time but has been under-valued and under-resourced. It's objectives will be reducing costs to ratepayers, lowering emissions and reducing our carbon footprint. I intend to make sure it happens.

One example is the next round of Waste Minimisation Funding which is due to open in October 2022. \$120 million is available for community and council-based waste reduction initiatives. We have secured \$250,000 for our new Resource Centre in Whitianga. This project has already been expanded and I have given an election commitment that we will reduce waste going to landfill by 50% by the end of 2024. This represents around 6000 tonnes per annum. 300 diesel trucks a year that no longer drive from the Coromandel to Paeroa or Hampton Downs. This is a result of three years of planning and hard work at community level working in partnership with Council, Community Board and the Ministry for the Environment. There's a lot more to be done.