

Chair's Report – May 2019

Climate change

Our world is facing an environmental crisis.



The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report indicated that if temperatures increase by 1.5 degrees celsius or more we face unprecedented risks and weather events.

But current trends in emissions suggest that we are instead facing a temperature increase of over 3 degrees.

To avert this, the IPCC's conclusion is that the world must reduce emissions of greenhouse gases to net zero by the middle of this century to have a reasonable chance of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. That is for global emissions. Western nations will need to reach this figure more quickly. To use the words of Greta Thunberg:

"... the climate crisis is the most complex issue that we have ever faced and it's going to take everything from our part to "stop it". But the solution is black and white; we need to stop the emissions of greenhouse gases.

Because either we limit the warming to 1.5 degrees C over pre industrial levels or we don't. Either we reach a tipping point where we start a chain reaction with events way beyond human control, or we don't. Either we go on as a civilization, or we don't. There are no gray areas when it comes to survival.

And when I say that I want you to panic, I mean that we need to treat the crisis as a crisis. When your house is on fire you don't sit down and talk about how nice you can rebuild it once you put out the fire. If your house is on fire you run outside and make sure that everyone is out while you call the fire department. That requires some level of panic."

Currently, Auckland Council's goal under its climate action plan is to achieve a 40% reduction of greenhouse gas generation by 2040. The Government's aim previously was for a 50% reduction by 2050. Under the Zero Carbon bill that has recently been released, it is now proposed that New Zealand becomes carbon neutral by 2050. And, the sooner that carbon neutrality is reached the better.

Not only are we facing a climate crisis but we are facing a soil crisis. It has been estimated by Maria-Helena Semedo of the Food and Agriculture Organization that, at current rates of degradation, all of the world's top soil could be gone within 60 years. About a third of the world's soil has already been degraded.

The causes of soil destruction include chemical-heavy, intensive and monoculture horticulture practices and farming techniques, deforestation which increases erosion, and global warming. Unless new approaches are adopted, the global amount of arable and productive land per person in 2050 will be only a quarter of the level in 1960.

Our fisheries are crashing with predictions that by 2048 fishing stocks will be depleted. This is the conclusion of a study by Boris Worm, of Dalhousie University.

And a recent UN report suggests that a million different species are facing extinction within the next 50 years.

These changes are not solely related to climate change. The use of unsustainable farming and fishing techniques play their part. But climate change is also having an effect. Clearly the world is facing an environmental crisis.

There has been a worldwide movement to declare climate change emergencies. The United Kingdom Parliament has passed a resolution declaring that the country is in an environmental and climate change emergency. The Welsh legislature has done the same. Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon has declared a climate emergency and various cities including London have also made declarations. Wellington Council is consulting on its draft pathway to zero carbon consultation (<https://www.zerocarboncapital.nz/>) and Nelson City Council's mayor has also indicated a desire to make a similar declaration.

The resolution passed by the UK Parliament included a goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050.

In the forward to the latest local board plan I said this:

"We want to do our part to encourage sustainability in the way we live and in our interaction with and care for our environment. What this means in practice is that we will seek to make sure all of our programmes are viewed through a sustainability lens, and that we will advocate within the Auckland Council family for the effects of climate change and environmental degradation."

Making of the declaration is a commitment to take the issue even more seriously than it has up to now and morally binds the Council to do something. It is confirming to the public that Council, both locally and regionally, have to address this issue more urgently than we have in the past..

Auckland Council was recently asked to declare a climate emergency. The promise was made to consider the request. I believe that Council needs to do more than this and put climate change at the centre of its thinking and decision making. The making of a declaration that we are in a climate crisis is the first step that needs to be taken.

Glen Esk Road

Auckland Council has recently consulted on options to address flooding on Glen Esk Road, Piha. The local board has taken a keen interest in what is happening and we were concerned at some of the proposals which include damming of the valley and constructing a tunnel to take excess water to Garden Road.

Both of these options are very expensive and highly destructive on the local environment and the prospects of them being approved are remote in the extreme. We thought they should be taken out of the options being consulted on. They were left in but the community response has been as predicted and I suspect that this will be the end of these particular proposals.

Glen Eden Playhouse

The local board had a very constructive meeting with trustees of the Glen Eden Playhouse Trust recently and both parties will work on improving and solidifying the relationship. There has not been council presence at trustee meetings for a number of years and I anticipate that an invitation for us to attend will be extended. There is also available funding which once certain Council requirements are met can be made available. And, the local board area does not have a civic quality facility and the Playhouse Trust could fulfil that requirement.

The Playhouse is an iconic building and the home of a great deal of important activity. I am very pleased that the board can work with the trust to make sure that the Playhouse is well protected and well used. I should acknowledge the work of local board member Ken Turner in helping with the improvement of the relationship between the trust and the board.

Glen Eden Safety project consultation results

The results have now been released.

One of the most frustrating aspects of the job is that the local board is on the receiving end of public complaints but sometimes, we are the last to hear when decisions are made. I only found out about the release of the consultation results concerning the Glen Eden safety project via Twitter when a couple of interested residents expressed concern at what had been decided.

And, the results are disappointing. I can understand the decision not to address safety at the level train crossing, at this stage, on the basis that the expense is considerable. I am aware it is in medium term projects although clearly the sooner the better.

But the proposal to increase the amount of right turning traffic onto Glenview Road from West Coast Road seems counter-productive. Especially, given the two tower apartment block is nearing completion and there is a need to improve safety so that kids living in the apartment houses can cross the road safely.

The scope of the project itself has been wound back. There will now be three raised platforms. And the reduction in speed has also been reduced with the minimum speed being retained at 50 kph.

The Board will meet with Auckland Transport in the near future to discuss my concerns and also to see what walking and cycling improvements the local board can lever off the project.

Anzac Day



The Anzac day ceremony this year was a much more subdued occasion. Numbers attending were down, possibly because of people taking the opportunity of having an extended break but possibly because of lingering concerns about the events of 15 March. Security arrangements were much more pronounced and contributed to what was a more sombre event. For instance, at Piha instead of us marching from the RSA to Lion Rock, we gathered more quietly at the rock.

I was privileged to give the speech at the Waikumete ceremony at 11 am. I took the chance to reflect on the contribution that some of my family made to the war and to the fight for freedom. I noted that in many, many families there were similar tales of bravery and commitment. I am sure that next year the event will be back to normal.

Congratulations to the RSAs for continuing to host these important events in difficult circumstances.

Glen Eden Apartments

These are well under way and I understand construction is due to be completed towards the end of the year. Plans for the opening and the influx of a number of new residents are still being formulated.

As part of the welcome process, the local board is investing in a proposal by a group Organiser by Jade Tang-Taylor for the production of a welcome home campaign which will involve the provision of information, pamphlets, a website, maps and events to welcome these residents to Glen Eden. A decision should be made on this soon.

Chickens



As I reported in my last Chair's report, the numbers of chickens in Titirangi Village is getting to be a real problem. There have always been a certain number of them but numbers seem to have ballooned lately. They are becoming a major nuisance.

I have received a number of complaints about them. Roosters crowing and keeping people awake at night are the most pressing examples of the problems being created.

There is also a concern at the environmental damage that they are causing. Unfortunately, the problem falls within in the middle of different council department's jurisdictions. In the past, Council has tried rehoming them using volunteers. This has had short term benefits but the problem has persisted.

The local board is prepared to apply its own budget to addressing the problem. Hopefully this will be advanced in the near future.

Farewell to Heber Gasu



Local community constable Heber Gasu is moving on. Thankfully for West Auckland, his policing skills will not be lost. He has recently been seconded to Youth Aid and will be stationed out west. His personable happy temperament will be ideal in dealing with troubled young people.

He remarked at his farewell how when he started the job, he was tucked away in an office at the Fire Station away from the centre of action. The local board was very conscious of this and that is why, following urging from Steve Tollestrup, we opened the safety hub. It has provided a home for Heber and BID manager Jennifer Conlon not to mention the Pacifica wardens and the Glen Eden Community Patrol. We believe that the police should be made a central part of our community and have been happy to assist.

The local board has recently reviewed the office. It has been given a spruce up. Rather than have closed in windows these have now been opened up to improve visibility both inside and outside. Also, Vision West have expressed an interest in using the office, although they could use even more space and the board is happy to do what we can.

I am sure that the new community constable will be like every other community constable that I have met. But Heber will be missed.

Beats and Eats



The beats and eats series has now completed. The intent was to enliven the Glen Eden area. With the help of Community Waitākere, the area outside the library was converted into an area where people could eat their dinner and listen to chilled out music at the same time. I believe the series was very successful and hope that we will consider running the events again when the weather improves.

Regards

Greg Presland

Waitakere Ranges Local Board Chairperson

greg.presland@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Phone +6421998411