

Date: Thursday 22 February 2024
Time: 4.00pm
Meeting Room: Waitākere Ranges Local Board Office
Venue: 39 Glenmall Place
Glen Eden

Waitākere Ranges Local Board

OPEN MINUTE ITEM ATTACHMENTS

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Waitākere Ranges Local Board - Chair's report February 2024

The Floods one year on



It has been just over a year since the Auckland anniversary floods. A lot has happened since then.

The buy back process has been designed and funded and offers are now being made.

Geotech reports have in many cases been completed and in some cases are being reviewed and adjusted.

Damaged roads have been repaired although, in my home suburb of Titirangi, some slips have become semi-permanent features of the landscape.

Locals have banded together and organised and formed effective means of communication between their communities and the Council.

And Council has formulated its Making Space for Water program and started to work out what to do with the properties that it is in the process of purchasing.

It has been a busy time for the local board. We have supported and fostered the local groups. We

have pushed for the Storm Recovery Navigation Service to be expanded particularly for Titirangi.

When Council officers suggested rates remission of half of the affected properties, we successfully pushed for this to be full remission.

And we have raised issues that owners of category 2P properties face. These are properties where remediation is possible but is site-specific and, in some cases, expensive. We are pleased that Council has announced a scheme whereby some financial assistance for these owners is now available.

There is a lot to do still. The buy back process needs to be completed. Issues about the cost of remediation of the sites need to be resolved. And there are far too many slips that have not yet been repaired.

And most importantly it is inevitable we will face similar events in the future. The world is still warming, greenhouse gas emissions are still increasing and although locally the volume of emissions has peaked, they need to be decreased dramatically for a new stability in the climate to be reached.

Local Board reorganisation

The Mayor has proposed amalgamations of some local boards for the purpose of devolution of power.

There have been some discussions about the possibility of Whau, Henderson-Massey and Waitākere Ranges amalgamating but the more likely or less unlikely outcome is for Waitākere Ranges and Henderson-Massey to merge.

I previously served as a Councillor on Waitākere City Council and have fond memories of that time and the kaupapa which drove the organisation. I was deeply concerned that the Eco City ethos was lost with the formation of the Super City and I believe that we need to give community and environmental concerns greater emphasis which Waitākere City did.

The local board has not formed a view yet, but my view is that re-amalgamation of the Western local boards into a coherent westie city needs to be given serious consideration.

But there are for me some bottom lines which include the following:

1. There is a need to preserve the unique nature of the west. There is a special need to preserve and protect the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area.
2. There would need to be significant devolution of decision-making power and resources. Examples are control over local roads and park contracts.
3. Subdivisions are important to ensure there is a good mix of geographical representation.
4. The process should not be a cost savings exercise. In particular, there should be no reduction in representative numbers. If change occurs local representatives will have more, not less, to do.
5. There needs to be a proper consultation with local communities about the options, and I doubt this can be completed in time so that changes are made for the next election.

If it happens then the new ward would have a greater population than Hamilton City with fewer councillors and less power to effect proper change. Any change has to be constructed properly and carefully.

Council's consultation on the Long-term Plan

The Council's consultation on the Long-term Plan will run from 28 February to 28 March 2024. Council is in the process of finalising the consultation documents, which will be available shortly.

In terms of finances, the Council's budget looks very tight. The Mayor has proposed savings in operating costs without specifying where they will come from. Last year we were consciously aware that the Waitākere Ranges Local Board was facing a \$765,000 cut and we were able to have a proper discussion with our communities, particularly our Arts and Environmental groups, and they let their views be known.

The Mayor wants to consult on the privatisation of Ports of Auckland's activities.

My view is that this would be very retrograde for the city. Experience overseas, especially in Australia, suggests that privatisation will energise the successful company and to some stage increase profitability by increasing costs. It will be more expensive for goods to be imported and for businesses to export.

This may sound strange, but the profitability of the Ports should not be the utmost concern. The smooth operations of the port are vital for the city's economic health. The dividends are an added

bonus. The port is a vital piece of transport infrastructure.

Not only this but Council has a strong interest in the future of the Ports area. Putting a Services contract in place will constrain it from developing the Ports area for the common good. Any change will no doubt be met with contractual claims for damages and loss of profits.

And the new board is doing a good job of repairing the damage caused by the failed automation project. The profitability of the Ports is increasing. Privatising operations would also privatise the increased profitability that the board has sought to achieve.

French Bay

The Local Board has had strong representations from locals at French Bay about the ongoing issue of the Coastguard building at French Bay which was wrecked by a landslide during last year's storm.

Negotiations between the Coast Guard and Council had bogged down with a disagreement about how much each party should contribute. We wrote to the Chief Executive urging him to get the matter resolved and the work completed. Any disagreement about shares could be resolved later.

I am pleased to advise that an agreement has been reached and the work will be performed in the near future.

Road repairs in the Local Board area

There has also been a great deal of local attention on this. Although some repairs have been completed other areas have slips that have not been started on and some information for the public is important.

This week the repairs to Karekare Road have been completed and the repairs to Titirangi Beach Road have begun.

The table in the schedule to my report sets out the outstanding repair sites, current status and date of the update.

Dark Skies

The board recently met with interested locals wanting to advance the status of the area as an accredited dark sky site.

To achieve accreditation will require some work measuring the darkness of the Waitākere sky at various places as well as the raising of awareness of the proposal with the community and seeking their support.

We are now in a position where the measuring can start. This will give us an idea of how dark the local sky is and what work will be needed.

The proposal has major cultural and environmental benefits and will let locals celebrate another aspect of the local area's beauty that is not often reflected on.

I will report progress as this develops.

Swimmable Beaches

It has long been my view that all of our local beaches should be swimmable.

In 2018 the local board commissioned Morphum to prepare a report called the Big Blue report.

The Intent was to give Council a snapshot of the current state of the environment and to be used to drive improvements.

Our timing was good because that year Mayor Goff proposed a dedicated water quality targeted rate and although much of that was tagged to improve water quality in the Waitematā it meant that there was a resource we could use.

There was also great local interest in the topic of water quality. For instance, in Laingholm Deirdre Merle organised locals to take stream and sea water samples to measure water quality and this spurred Council into action.

Previously Titirangi beach and Laingholm beach were permanently closed. After faults were identified and repaired they were again open.

That leaves us with two permanently closed beaches, Wood Bay and Foster Bay and I am determined that we resolve issues with these beaches.

I will be inviting the local board to discuss matters with Healthy Waters to see what can be done to resolve these issues.

All of our beaches should be swimmable all of the time.

Congestion in Glen Eden

Heather Tanguay and the Glen Eden Residents Association have recently made representations to the local board about issues with West Coast Road, particularly around the Glenview Road intersection by the Glen Eden Railway Station.

Their submissions have been well made and the local board is discussing the matter with Auckland Transport to see what improvements can be made.

Current issues highlight what may happen in the future.

When the city rail link opens potential train trip frequency will double. Barrier arms will be down for up to twice as long. The effect will ripple through and affect traffic on nearby roads. Already at peak times congestion is very problematic.

A long term solution is grade separation of the railway line, either below or above the road.

This solution will not be cheap and will cause considerable disruption. I had some involvement in the campaign to lower the rail line in New Lynn in 2008. Back then the predictions were that rail frequency would cause gridlock on the roads in New Lynn if the rail remained at grade. The solution was expensive but looking back it allowed quality intensification in New Lynn and a superior urban form.

I believe it important that the local board discusses these issues with Auckland Transport and KiwiRail so that an understanding of the future of the area and the issues it will face is reached and communicated to the public.

Can I commend Heather and the Glen Eden Residents for the quality of their meeting. They actively sought people to raise issues through social media. The meeting was well attended, and we received a great deal of helpful feedback. This is the sort of meeting that I had in mind when I raised the possibility of Community Forums and I have asked Mark Allen to work on plans to advance our intent that these meetings are held throughout the local board area.

