

# SHADES OF GREEN

By Tom Belford

As I talk to people around the Bay, and consider the issues they raise in emails and phone calls, concerns for our region's environment come up over and over.

And these concerns come from across the spectrum, in many shades of green – from conservative businessmen who value clean rivers in which to catch trout; to orchardists and horticulturalists who want to protect the Bay's versatile soils; to average folks who want protected landscapes and beaches, urban trees and healthy air; to the

most passionate Greens whose concerns stretch from global warming to over-use of chemicals to sustainable lifestyle choices.

Our councils play a significant role in whether the aspirations of these "environmentalists" (some would resist the label) will be met. And although the Regional Council is the "official" protector of the Bay's environment, our other local bodies are important players as well.

So it is appropriate that all candidates be asked for their views about environmental issues, along with the priority they give to

this area compared to others. Reflecting on issues that have come before the councils in the last couple of years, here is a "Top Ten" list of environmental challenges you might question candidates about.

Let me begin by taking "Water" off this list. Water, its availability and quality, and its impact on our ecosystems, seems to stand head and shoulders over all other environmental concerns in the Bay at this time. So we have dealt with water issues in a separate article in this Digest, written by water expert Morry Black.

## Setting top environmental priorities

### Protecting and Restoring Soils

Many agree that HB's most critical asset, our productive soils, are seriously threatened, in terms of both availability and quality.

The threat of losing productive land to development and urban sprawl has been serious enough that the Hastings, Napier and Regional Councils have just gone through a major planning exercise, the Heretaunga Plains Urban Development Strategy (HPUDS), aimed at confining spatial growth as much as possible to our existing urban centres. HPUDS, however, has no force of law, and if its goals are to be achieved, councils must embed them in their respective district and regional plans.

Another threat to availability is soil erosion. According the Regional Council, "20% of the region is at risk of significant soil erosion, which may take 100 years to reverse at current rates of improvement."

Then there's soil quality. Says HBRC: "Soil structure is often degraded on cropping land, and soil compaction is a significant problem ..." Hawke's Bay, obviously not alone in the world, has now had about sixty years of chemically-oriented farming. Within the last twenty years in New Zealand, our farmers have used 600% more urea, and their production has not lifted even 50% in that time. Meanwhile, the data indicate the vitamin and mineral content of our food has



declined 60% in sixty years. Old-timers would say taste has suffered as well.

This hardly sounds like a viable long-term business model, let alone a sustainable approach to using the Bay's precious land resource. Fortunately, a number of farmers and viticulturists are taking alternative approaches based upon re-building the quality of the soil, even as it is used. Approximately 40,000 hectares in Hawke's Bay are practicing some form of "biological" farming. Common sense would dictate our local elected officials, as devoted to the Bay's land-based economy as they are (and should be), would move protecting the quantity and quality of our land and soil to the top of their agendas.

### Coasts

Here the issue is what to protect ... and what not to protect. Environmentalists won a major victory with the protection of Ocean Beach from massive development. The HPUDS report

indicates that any future efforts to develop Ocean Beach would be officially resisted.

The focus has shifted to Haumoana/Te Awanga and Westshore. In the Hastings District, local threatened communities propose an engineering solution to beach erosion that environmentalists say is a fruitless effort to fend off the inescapable rise in sea level and more intense storms associated with global warming. Most Hastings and Regional Councillors are treading water on this one ... what do their challengers say?

And at Napier's Westshore, a different engineering solution seeks to protect that beach ... with environmentalists again saying this approach merely shifts the erosion problem up the coast. Napier's Mayor and Councillors seem determined to proceed ... what do their challengers say?

**SHADES OF GREEN cont pg 3.**

## Council debt, should we worry?

By Katherine Edmond

Debt is a burden, however you look at it. If you borrow money, you have to pay it back and when it's local authorities doing the borrowing, the responsibility for payback ultimately falls on ratepayers.

Like most local authorities in New Zealand, Hawke's Bay councils have a history of taking out loans to pay for big projects. But they don't score too badly when compared to what some other cities and districts owe. In 2009, for every rateable property, Napier had debt of \$1,628 and Hastings \$2,011, much lower than New Plymouth, for example, on \$6,896 and Invercargill on \$4,517.

But having lower debt levels than some others is not, in itself, a reason to sigh with relief. A community's ability to service loan repayments is more important than the size of its debt register.

One thing that complicates the debt debate is differing views on whether figures should include both "internal" and "external" loans. Most of us have external debt which is money borrowed from financial institutions at market rates. Internal debt is what local authorities borrow from their own accumulated cash. For example, say the Napier City Council set aside \$5million towards the cost of upgrading the Art Gallery and Museum some years back and, with interest earned, the money has grown to \$6 million. In the meantime the Council has borrowed that money from itself to pay for something else. Now that the Art Gallery and Museum upgrade is going ahead, the \$6 million has to be paid back.

A key advantage of internal borrowing is that local authorities can raise money at more favourable interest rates. The risk is that the money won't be there when it's needed for its original purpose. Some, like the Hawke's Bay Chamber of Commerce, say debt is debt whomever it's owed to and it's gross figures (including both internal and external debt) that count. Others say internal debt is different because, for a variety of reasons, it doesn't always have to be paid back.

So, how much do the three major local bodies in Hawke's Bay owe?

The Hastings District Council has the heftiest load with gross debt of around \$85 million. The figure's growing and could reach more than \$100 million in the next few years, depending on which big projects go ahead.

**COUNCIL DEBT cont pg 5.**

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## From the editor...

After several years of agitating from the back bench as editor of BayBuzz, I have decided to stand for the Hawke's Bay Regional Council.

The current Council has been asleep at the wheel, falling behind over the last decade in both of its major functions — protecting our environment and promoting a more vibrant and diversified regional economy.

They've let our rivers and aquifers degrade ... failed to manage our precious water in a sustainable manner ... watched our soils deteriorate ... failed to stand up to our local councils who have allowed or added pollution of their own ... and dragged their feet on healthy air and toxic contamination.

The Regional Council must also promote tourism and economic development; however here too we are lagging in performance. In both areas I see huge opportunities, especially for 'clean growth' in the Bay, producing better incomes without compromising our environment.

Our current councillors lack the imagination and foresight to champion such a future.

It's time for new ideas, more vigorous action, and fresh faces.

Specifically, I am standing for one of the four Hastings ward seats on the Regional Council, currently occupied by Councillors von Dadelszen, Rose, McGregor and Remmerswaal. Excluding newcomer Remmerswaal, the Council's lonely environmental advocate, the three other Hastings ward representatives have served collectively 33 years. That's long enough.

I am pleased to be nominated by Claire Vogtherr, local business, education and civic leader, and by Bruno Chambers, farmer, environmentalist and chairman of the Te Mata Park Trust.

I look forward to speaking up for you.

Of course BayBuzz will continue to provide issue analysis from me and the many other voices who speak up in BayBuzz. Our newspaper and website are open to all candidates for advertising, and our website includes a section — Election 2010 — with links to candidates' online resources.



**TOM BELFORD**  
editor

This edition of **BayBuzz Digest** raises a variety of issues voters might want to think about as they consider candidates standing for election in 2010.

*Different Shades of Green* provides a checklist of environmental issues that challenge us in the Bay. And Morry Black focuses on the crucial need to manage our water wisely.

Katherine Edmond looks at council debt and the spending policies that have generated about \$162 million in gross borrowings by the Hastings, Napier and Regional Councils. Excessive or appropriate? You be the judge.

Chamber of Commerce Chief Executive Murray Douglas looks at the role of local councils with respect to promoting regional growth. He's not impressed with the track record so far.

The health of sport in the Bay is assessed by Councillor Wayne Bradshaw, and Des Ratima looks at future Maori participation in council decision-making.

Angela Hair and Phyllis Tichinin seek your vote for a stronger focus on sound nutrition as a pillar of regional health policy. And Jacob Scott asks for a re-think of councils' approach to arts and culture.

Tim Gilbertson asks voters to check the "downward spiral of provincial New Zealand," while Matt Miller says the way forward is for the Bay is to "grow ideas."

Finally, regular columnist Anna Lorck says that all of these issues pale in significance to the overarching need for amalgamation.

Plenty of issues for you and the candidates to ponder.

# Claws come out in favour of amalgamation



**ANNA LORCK**  
columnist

When I started writing for BayBuzz, I was brought on as a counterpoint, a lioness who wasn't afraid to roar.

Until now I've been basking in "everything under the sun" purring and enjoying myself and playing a bit of cat and mouse with editor Tom Cat.

But the stakes are getting higher now, and as the elections approach I've been told to sharpen my claws.

My prey is waiting, and yes I'm ready to pounce. But before I go in for the kill, I will seek out those who will feed me the longest — and then those to make a meal of...

Unlike many of my fellow feline friends, when it's time for action I won't play games and taunt you, I will execute my vote with precision — clean and quick — no mercy.

The thing about local body elections is generally the calibre of candidates is not that tasty.

So, as cats do, I will spare those who will give me and my family what we want and befriend them.

And the rest I will devour (unfortunately it won't be a five course degustation with sublime wine, because most of those who need to go are so long in the tooth they'll really only be good for jelly-meat!).

As you know my coat is black and white — no grey. For me the regional divide has and will continue to be the single greatest thing stopping our region from economic and community growth — it's what has cost us more in lack of progress than anything else.

So let's get right to the point, anyone who is not in favour of amalgamation is on notice — you are dead-meat.

The only thing that has saved your skin so far is that enough politicking and positioning has been done to virtually remove amalgamation as an election issue.

Having accomplished this, you are all quite happy, once you have retained or gained a seat, to start talking about it (if that's what the people want).

I, like many, will make sure you do because it is what we want.

And you need to realise that *the next time we cast our vote, it will be for a single regional authority.*

What I struggle to understand is the short-sightedness, and what I see as nothing less than self-important political egos of mainly Napier politicians unwilling to embrace Hastings District for a greater Hawke's Bay.

Good on you, wanting to protect your patch, and your seat by assuring constituents that you will be their voice, that they will still be represented if we have one council.

Of course they will have representation, but what I can promise them is that under one council they will get more — not less — because a better flavor of candidate will stand ... those who are prepared to speak up, embrace change and take our region to a new level.

But before you take this too personally, I will put it into context.

I speak from twenty years experience. Local body politics has been part of my working life since I left school.

As a budding cadet reporter for the CHB Mail, I covered council meetings week after week, and would spend my nights writing up stories on sewerage, water, roading and community assets.

Back then there were two councils — one in Waipukurau and one in Waipawa — and a bridge between the two parochial towns.

Two decades on, under one Central Hawke's Bay Council, the bridge has literally gone. And to me the new road on State Highway 1, which I drive occasionally, shows how far we have, and have not, come.

Today the issues debated around the council table have not changed since I was 17. For me, walking into a council chamber and listening to the wise is like going back in time. So forgive me for twitching my tail.

What's worse is you can walk into both councils and hear exactly the same debate — just different people, who occasionally pipe up with: "I wonder what Napier (or Hastings) is doing about it?" It's farcical.

Surely Hastings and Napier can learn from their CHB counterparts, who not surprisingly support joining forces, having already experienced the benefits of two towns — one council.

Apart from deciding where the council chambers would be (a consolation for Waipawa), I can't remember anything else that really caused heated debate.

This is not about sharing services, reducing rates and overheads.

We all know that the cost of living and working will go up not down.

This is about creating and leading a brighter, bolder and more sustainable future, embracing a regional strategy for stronger, healthier and safer communities.

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BayBuzz Digest is a community focused publication that examines hot button local issues and promotes public awareness and debate. A mix of independent editorial commentary, behind the scenes reporting, and a healthy dose of humor, BayBuzz Digest begins where other newspapers leave off to probe the big issues and tough questions facing our region and shaping our future.

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# KEEPING CHECK OF THE GREEN ISSUES

**SHADES OF GREEN cont from pg 1.**

And at Napier's Westshore, a different engineering solution seeks to protect that beach ... with environmentalists again saying this approach merely shifts the erosion problem up the coast. Napier's Mayor and Councillors seem determined to proceed ... what do their challengers say?

## Healthy Air

Health-threatening air pollution in urban Hastings and Napier arises from open fireplaces and woodburners, in the form of small particulates (PM10), which under national standards set back in 2005 must be reduced.

After five years after doing nothing to meet the new standard, political "leaders" in the Bay boast that they recently managed to get the Environment Minister to postpone the deadline for five years to 2018.

It seems that once the Regional Council woke up (during which period most other Regional Councils acted to meet the standard), there just wasn't enough time or installation capacity physically available to meet the deadline by phasing in healthier home heating options.

So now our community — especially our children and the elderly — will bear the health and productivity consequences of PM10 pollution for five more years than we needed to (already Hastings as exceeded the permitted pollution standard ten times).

The health impacts are increased asthma and all sorts of respiratory and cardiovascular complications.

The productivity impacts are lost work and school days. In Christchurch studies estimated the average non-complying woodburner generated health costs alone of at least \$2,700 every year.

Ask candidates if they are satisfied with this outcome, or would they have acted differently?

## Urban Landscapes

Our different HB communities have different looks and feels, in no small part due to the nature of development and environmental amenities they welcome.

Contributing to this living environment is some amalgam of walking trails, cycling paths, reserves and public parks, plantings, urban tree protection, waterway protections, Waahi tapu and historic preservation — all nurtured (or not) by council budgets, official plans and zoning, by-laws, building codes and the like.

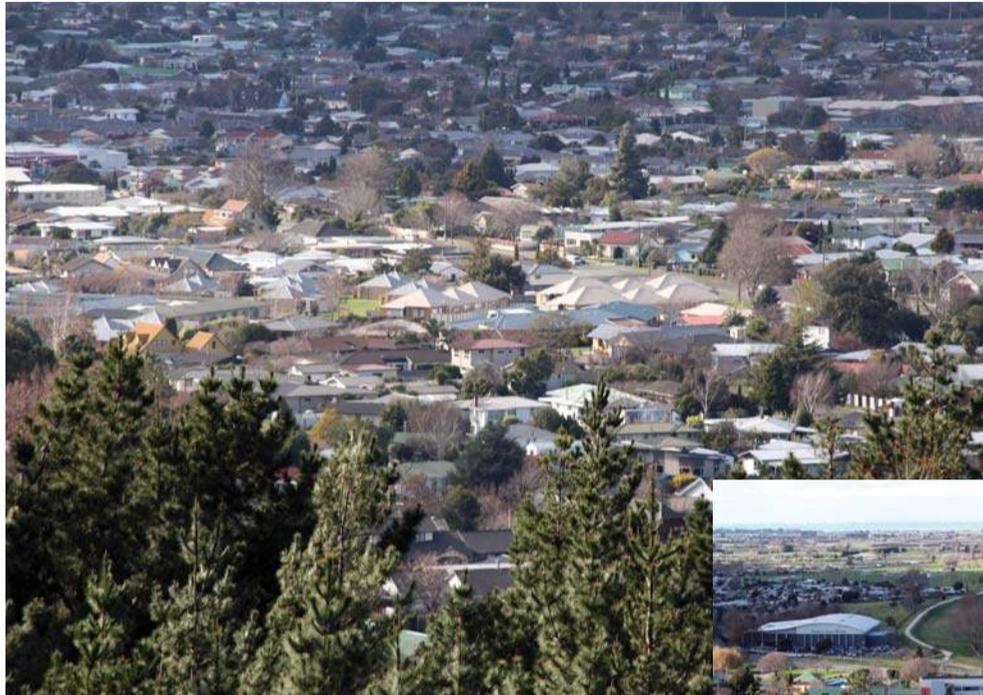
Councils importantly shape your daily living environment. What are the most important two or three steps candidates would propose to improve yours?

## Biodiversity

The most anemic and embarrassing section of the Regional Council's *State of the Environment Report 2004-2008* deals with biodiversity. It's seven sentences long.

After conceding that the Council has very limited information on the condition of wetlands (those actively managed are termed "only in poor-to-moderate health") and stream edges, two critical habitats, the section concludes: "Council also has insufficient information to report on regional-scale terrestrial biodiversity."

Do any candidates care about biodiversity?



While HBRC is the primary regulator and monitor here, other councils deal with critical contributing factors like stormwater run-off into vulnerable streams and estuaries, urban plantings and reserves.

## Wastewater and Stormwater

Hastings and Napier Councils allocate millions of ratepayer dollars to treating wastewater and managing stormwater run-off, under the environmental scrutiny of the Regional Council.

Both Hastings and Napier have committed to new "biological trickling filter" (BTF) systems for processing their wastewater before discharging it into the Bay. The odour problems with the now \$30 million or so Hastings plant are legendary. And impacts of its "biomass" discharge to the sea are unknown. Napier, following the same path, is now seeking its resource consent from the Regional Council.

The environmentalist view is that odour is the least of the problem — they say additional treatment of the sewage should be required before any discharge to the Bay is permitted. Virtually all other operating BTF systems include "clarifying" ponds to remove suspended solids from their discharge.

Hastings and Napier skip that step in their systems to reduce costs and address Maori concerns about transporting sludge. Ask candidates, are the Hastings and Napier BTF systems good enough for you.

With increasing paving over of our urban areas, more and more stormwater run-off finds its way into the region's streams and rivers, threatening their ecosystems.

The Regional Council has just — for the first time — required a resistant Hastings to clean-up its act with regard to discharging its stormwater into local rivers and streams. Napier will soon face the same HBRC consenting process.

How do candidates view this emerging regulatory regime — too tough, appropriate, not tough enough?

## Climate Change

The Regional Council reports that rainfall has been "significantly below average" in the region over four of the last five September to April periods. Central and southern Hawke's Bay have experienced three droughts, and northern HB two in the same period. Consistent with this,

mean river flows have been below the long term mean for the past five years.

In the longer term, the Council comments that climate change is expected to bring warmer, drier conditions to the region: "There could be more extremes in Hawke's Bay such as prolonged dry periods and intense rainfall events, leading to more droughts and floods." With rising sea levels and more intense off-shore storms, adverse coastal impacts will come into play as well.

If this is our future, candidates need to be asked how we should prepare ... and specifically what the local government role should be in areas like energy conservation (including transportation and fuel options, heating homes and water), coastal protection (should we be building groins, shifting shingle?), building and farming in low-lying areas, encouraging

climate-appropriate farming and forestry, and conserving water.

## Environmental Health

Clearly the presence of pollutants in our air, water, soil and, potentially, food chain can have serious impact on human health.

In recent times, issues have been raised about PM10 (fine particle) air pollution principally from woodburners, healthiness of recreational swimming areas, dangers from toxic chemical contaminated sites and waterways, and over-use of agri-chemicals. Unfortunately, the roles and responsibilities of various local government bodies, as well as the District Health Board, in

protecting us from environmental health hazards are fragmented and often murky ... a situation which is ripe for inattention, inaction and buck-passing. For example, the Regional Council might monitor waterways for health-threatening pollution, but the

DHB issues the health warnings.

The Regional Council sets conditions for various discharges into the water and soil, but often it is the territorial councils who determine what activities are permitted that generate the discharges. The DHB encourages addition of fluoride to municipal water, but the territorial body decides whether to do it. Many local body councillors (and, I suspect, candidates) are hard-pressed to identify environmental health issues for which they should bear responsibility.

But they should be asked to do so, and certainly Regional Council and DHB candidates should be asked their views on the environmental health priorities they will urge upon their respective bodies.'

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# COUNCILS STRUGGLE TO STIMULATE ECONOMIC GROWTH

**By Murray Douglas**  
**Chief executive**  
**Hawke's Bay Chamber of Commerce**

The recent well-publicised problems of our regional economic development agency (EDA), Venture Hawke's Bay, and their budget woes suggests that once again we need to re-assess what is the role of local authorities in economic development. This question is even more poignant when we recall that our EDA over the last 10 or so years has had a variety of names, structures and at least eight general managers ... and (arguably) remarkably few 'runs on the board'.

Underneath or beside the EDA, are the district or city councils who have been involved in local economic development more within their boundary than wider regional interest. Napier City has a long serving manager where there has been some consistency in approach. In the case of the other authorities it either has had a hands-off approach or a more modest effect.

But local government, whether overtly or not, has a role in facilitating or hindering local economic development and this can take a number of shapes.

## What's Economic Development?

Before we consider the roles and contribution of Local Government in local economic growth it is important to present a clear definition of what we are talking about. In other words, what is the process of economic development and for what intended outcome?

Broadly defined, 'economic development' is a process by which all resources in a given area are brought together in more creative and efficient ways to support an area's capacity to increase its level of income and capital (wealth) and to distribute that wealth (through local expenditure and employment) to the community.

As one text on the subject puts it, "*The ultimate goal of economic development policy can be thought of as sharing wealth through the creation and rewarding of jobs.*" The implication in this is that municipal or regional population also grows, and this along with employment growth 'justifies' the economic development investment.

Over the last twenty years, local governments throughout New Zealand have become increasingly active in promoting and facilitating

economic development. At the same time, central government has also tried to foster 'regional' economic development, through grants programmes and increasingly recognizing Regional Tourist Organisations (RTOs) and Regional Economic Development Agencies. Most regions have these as two separate groups. In Hawke's Bay these have traditionally been combined, albeit sometimes with tension between the two activities.

## Council: The Passive Facilitator

Irrespective of whether Local Government actively touts for business, a council is an economic player in its local (and regional) economy in a number of ways and sets the scene for development (or not):

- it spends money on development infrastructure that facilitates business and community activity and sustains environmental quality (e.g., roads, drains, parks, and gardens);
- it provides important community services that support economic activity and promote the health and well-being of the local population. These assist in social cohesion and the development of local identity (e.g., recreation services)
- it is an effective partner in the early stages of project development through its role in development approvals (e.g., planning, building);
- it is often the point of contact for local businesses and the community in relation to day-to-day concerns that affect the immediate environment for business production and quality of life (e.g., local land use conflicts and their resolution, lobbying other spheres of government for attention to problems outside the Council's responsibility, providing information on changes to regulations, development controls, etc.).

These are fundamental obligations of Councils, but not all recognize that they directly influence the way in which the local economy develops. We should not underestimate the importance of these core roles. If you like, it is making the area 'capacity ready' for a conducive business environment. The work in HB with regional transport linkages over the last thirty years is an instructive case in point.

On the other hand, confusing inter-boundary district plan issues, petty bureaucracies, and delays or inconsistencies in (say) the regional water plan are examples where we are not 'business ready'. The fact that the current government had to streamline RMA in part to indicate to Local

Government that it was hampering economic development suggests that all is not well yet in this role. It was not that long ago that builders and developers were going to picket Hastings District Council for their consent delays and petty issues.

Nothing less than best practice in each of the areas of responsibility should be the goal of Local Government. However not all Councils do this consistently or well. Local Councillors and officers must realize that the attitudes they adopt and the decisions that they make resonate in the local community.

Apart from the important task of Councils getting their own *house in order*, so to speak, a more pro-active role can (and should?) be adopted to stimulate and encourage local/regional economic development.

## Council- the Active Facilitator

This is when it gets tricky. There are as many models of local government facilitation for economic development as there are local governments. In my experience they change frequently and have decidedly mixed results. Most local governments rate the importance of their role as facilitator of economic development highly.

Why? Simply because councils are political bodies and for the most part often with poorly defined responsibilities. The big issue arises where local government goes beyond (or actually fails to clearly undertake) the infrastructure works and land use planning for what I call 'core' programmes, and set out to be promotional vehicles, business assistance programmes or even commercial 'entrepreneurs' and actively enter the market.

Frankly, if local governments just did the basics well, then they would both be within their role ... and doing a great service.

Some local governments nonetheless claim great relevance in economic development as, locally, people do turn to them, especially when things get tough. Unfortunately, a few Councils even believe they are the *lead* agency for regional economic development. When this claim is made, I try to look for evidence of real effect of these interventions, and generally find them wanting. Even central government nowadays is wary of betting against the market.

If there is a role here beyond the core infrastructure of 'liveability' and access, the process necessarily must be through partnerships

or coalitions. Indeed to me, the key quality or skill of local government's economic role is the ability to build coalitions with the private sector and other government agencies ... and use this process to leverage joint outcomes. Sadly, words like 'partnership' are glibly used; it's much harder to find genuine stakeholder benefits.

In this context, one of the best roles Local Government can play is simply as honest broker to focus overlapping activities and a lack of mutual direction which is common in economic development activity. And in this, Local Government need not be the 'lead', but rather should *cause it to happen*.

A cameo role here for Local Government is coordinating local funding submissions to central government to gain the (increasing) limited funding available. Venture HB, despite apparent systemic problems in other areas, has achieved this in recent times.

## What about Ratepayer Money?

Councils have powers to compulsorily extract money for various activities. The market often fails in terms of joint funding initiatives for particularly diverse sectors, such as tourism. Here Local Government rating powers can be cautiously used for the 'public good'.

Where the funding is targeted, such as CBD marketing rates or the new regional business rate, then there is a strong argument for these sectors to manage and use these funds within some publicly approved business plan. The theory is that these funds are extracted to get some economies of scale in terms of the benefit.

Local governments sometimes use rate holidays or cheap land as inducements to business to establish or expand. These are forms of ratepayer subsidy (or loss of rates). In my experience, these approaches are high risk distorters and the New Zealand government history has shown poor quality subsidised outcomes.

## Skin in the Game

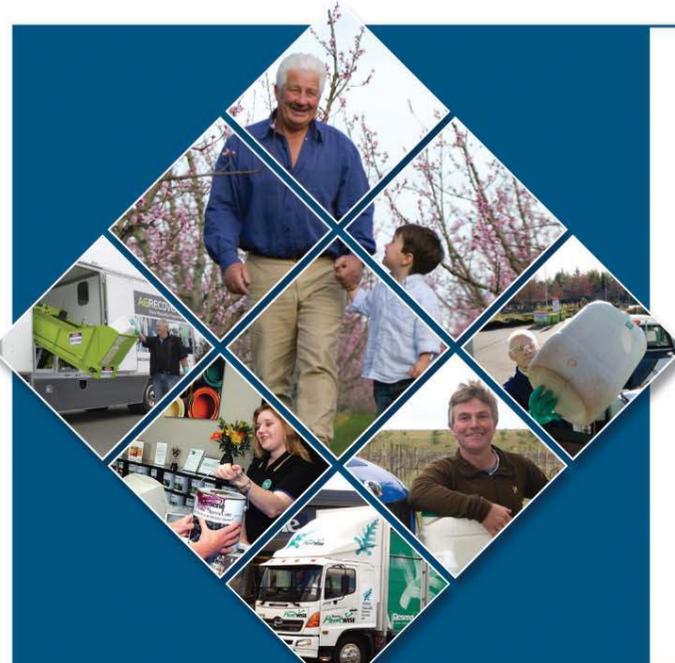
What I always find disappointing at both elected and officer level is the economic insularity of Local Government in Hawke's Bay. This inhibits economic progress. It is critical that Councils understand the nature and working of the local economy so they can respond to change and need. Sadly the openness of the elected and appointed officials here has been uneven or episodic - and even more telling - lacking in strategic focus.

In-house, local governments need to get their own core business infrastructure functions right to have proper land strategies and streamlined regulatory systems. To me this is the core responsibility of councils. It is a huge role in its own right, but not done consistently or within some overall economic plan.

Outside of this, the role should be more an active partnership model using the strengths of the private sector in the region. After all, the private sector is the principal driver of economic growth.

If initiatives are to have any chance of survival and beneficial effect, economic development must be business-led by people with 'skin in the game'. The skills of local government to do this are about managing people on issues where they believe they can have an influence.

After all, Hawke's Bay needs to grow from within and attract people who choose to live here, or we will end up only with people who have no choice.



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# PUBLIC DEBT RISES

Cont from pg 1.

Hawke's Bay Chamber figures show Hastings gross debt rose 88 per cent between 2002 and 2009. There was a cumulative rate rise of 45 per cent in the same period, while household inflation increased by 22 per cent.

Hastings Mayor Lawrence Yule prefers to talk about external debt only, and to look further back. He says at the time of local government amalgamation in 1989, Hastings owed \$40 million to external lenders, not hugely different from the \$50.5 million it owed externally at the end of June 2010. Loans dropped to a low of less than \$20 million in 2006, but have risen steadily since then as the Council has borrowed to pay for wastewater treatment, the Hawke's Bay Opera House, Heretaunga House, and the new sports park.

Whichever figures you use, it adds up to Hastings ratepayers having to fork out more as a result of the Council's borrowing in recent years. Wayne Bradshaw, who chairs the Council's Finance and Monitoring Committee, estimates around \$150 of an \$1800 rate bill is currently going on debt servicing.

Napier's debt is lower, but not by much, says Hawke's Bay Chamber Chief Executive Murray Douglas.

The Napier City Council regularly quotes a debt figure of less than \$8 million, but that's only what it owes to external lenders. Napier's gross debt is forecast to total \$58.5 million by the end of the 2010/11 year. And Napier's rates have also been going up with a cumulative rate rise of 36 per cent between 2002 and 2009, well above the rate of household inflation.

"When you look at the ratio of ratepayers to debt, both Hastings and Napier are in roughly the same position," says Douglas.

A portfolio of assets and investments allows the Hawke's Bay Regional Council to earn more and borrow less than other councils. Its chief asset, the Port of Napier, paid the Council \$6.5 million in dividends in 2009, subsidising expenditure that could otherwise fall on ratepayers. The Regional Council also has a range of money-earning investments, and reserves of well over \$45 million. Despite that, the Council is taking out loans this year worth \$6.7 million, which will push its total debt to \$19 million by the end of the 2010/11 financial year. In the seven years from 2002 to 2009, there was a cumulative rise of 83 per cent in Regional Council rates, but the figure is high because it came off a low base.

## Should Ratepayers Worry?

Whether we should be worried about the Hastings and Napier City Councils' debt levels depends on your political perspective.

Napier Mayor Barbara Arnott says the city is in a better position than at any time in the past 50 years and she attributes at least some of that to good financial management.

When Arnott became Mayor in 2001, 57 per cent of Napier's expenditure came from rates, while today rates account for 43 per cent of what the city spends.

"Our position is incredibly manageable and councillors have been trained to be disciplined and careful. We have a very good asset maintenance plan, we don't have ad hoc spending and we have planned for major expenses like sewerage treatment and upgrading the Art Gallery and Museum."

But it's not all the result of being frugal - income from assets owned by the Napier City Council has undoubtedly helped to keep rates

down. This includes a portfolio of commercial leasehold properties and the Parklands Residential Development on land that was given to the Napier City Council as a result of the 1989 local government reorganisation.

Hastings has no such family silver, which is a key reason its debt levels have risen faster and higher.

"Napier has an almost guaranteed source of income so they can better afford debt repayments. Hastings has no such cash cow," says Hastings mayoralty contender Simon Nixon.

Nixon believes bad decision making and poor financial management have also contributed to Hastings' situation.

"Too many things the Hastings District Council has done, like Splash Planet and the Opera House, were said to be income generating and they're not. On top of that, borrowings are often not disclosed. Expenses get buried in the system and come out at the other end in increased borrowings."

Mayor Yule, on the other hand, says he is not worried about Hastings debt. "The reason Hastings has more debt than Napier or the Regional Council is that they both have vast assets that deliver additional income whereas we have to rely on rates or borrow. Of course we know the debt has to be paid back, but I actually think the amount we owe in Hastings is fine and, spread across our rating base, it's not a huge burden."

Murray Douglas says there's nothing wrong, in principle, with borrowing money for long-term, intergenerational projects, but he is concerned about loans being used to 'pay for the groceries'.

"There are examples where things like footpath maintenance has been funded by short term debt in Hastings. At the moment interest rates are low, but if they go back up councils with a lot of debt are going to be in a pickle."

Councillor Wayne Bradshaw says Hastings debt levels are partly the result of trying to do too much. "We should be sticking to the basics, like roads, sewage and infrastructure, the core services our community expects us to provide."

Bradshaw is concerned that too little research is being done into the ability of Hastings ratepayers to service the district's debt burden in the future.

"With the exception of a couple of pockets, Hastings is a low income area with falling property values. In addition we have a population that is both aging and will include greater numbers of Maori and Pacific Islanders, both groups that historically have low, fixed incomes and high health needs.

"My question is, who's going to pay? There will be a pinch point where people won't be able to afford to live here. None of those things have been properly looked at."

## Cash Envy?

Amalgamation is firmly on the table as an election issue and the level of Hastings debt has been cited as one of the reasons Napier is reluctant to get into bed with its twin city. Few, however, seem to agree.

Nixon says there is an 'irrational hatred of Hastings by Napier' and the debt issue is a smokescreen. Barbara Arnott refutes that either hatred or debt are behind Napier's opposition to amalgamation.

"People in Napier like what they have and that local decisions are made locally."

## COUNCIL DEBT WOES

**If you're worried about debt, what might you be seeking from council candidates?**

**Clarity about their own level of concern ... does it match yours?**

**Commitment to restraint in future borrowing ... what limit, if any, would they endorse?**

**Purposes for which they regard borrowing as appropriate, or not**

**Better information about the cost of debt repayments in the future**

**More transparency in council book keeping and budgeting**

**Specific reductions in council spending they would endorse (and what savings they have achieved if they are sitting councillors)**

Murray Douglas also believes the debt issue is a red herring in respect to amalgamation.

He says there are proven systems for making sure regions keep their own debt repayments after amalgamation and the real question is whether joining councils would bring strategic benefits for Hawke's Bay.

Last time amalgamation was put to the vote in Hawke's Bay, the Regional Council sat on the sidelines and one thing most agree on is that mustn't happen this time.

"They've got the cash and we've got the assets," says Barbara Arnott.

Napier City Councillor Bill Dalton puts it like this: "It is a stupid situation to have the Napier and Hastings Councils struggling from one pay day to the next, while the Regional Council spends much of its time debating what to do with its money."

Mayor Yule, however, is adamant that amalgamation is not a 'cash grabbing' exercise.

"The regional council's resources need to be used to add strategic assets to the region, not to pay off territorial authorities' debt."

Regional Council Chair Alan Dick is cautious. "It's not that we won't share wealth. We've

recently allocated funds for the Art Gallery and Museum in Napier, the velodrome in Hastings and the Waipawa town hall refurbishment and Wairoa knows we will partner with them on a suitable project.

"But I would need to be absolutely assured that the Regional Council's priorities and its economic and environmental focus would not be downgraded and subsumed by projects like swimming pools and sports parks."

There are two other issues with financial implications certain to be debated by Regional Council candidates in the election campaign - the Council's plan to form a holding company and the merits of the water storage plan for Central Hawke's Bay.

The proposed holding company would oversee many of the Council's business interests, including the Port of Napier, with the rationale being that it would make sharper investments and boost returns from the council's 'lazy' portfolio.

Critics have questioned whether setting up a holding company would give the Council less control over its assets and the advisability of making riskier investments with Council funds.

What happens with water storage in Central Hawke's Bay depends on the outcome of a feasibility study but, if the plan gets the green light, it could cost around \$200 million.

Regional Council chair Alan Dick says there are a variety of options for footing the bill including partnering with iwi and/or irrigators who will benefit from the scheme. He says the Regional Council could come up with a share of the funds relatively easily and he doesn't see finance for the project as being a stumbling block.

One initiative that could go a small way towards reducing the cost of local government debt repayments is a bank that is to be owned by a consortium of local councils.

It's likely to be up and running next year and Mayor Yule predicts it could shave 0.8 per cent off the interest rate for local body loans by being able to borrow money more cheaply than individual councils.

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# Enterprise drains water resources

By Morry Black

Much of the Hastings urban area was built on the flood plain. The wetlands were drained and stop-banks erected to contain the rivers and streams, protect the town and expedite the conveyance of water to the sea. Now during the summers most of us are told to preserve water, while irrigators take far more water from our rivers than our statutory plans allow for to replace soil moisture deficits. And, in places, our ground water resources are actually being mined during the summer. For several years now, record low levels have been monitored for the Heretaunga aquifer system.

In Napier, the shallow lagoons were also drained and filled in as suburbia spread outwards from the Napier Hill. The numerous roads joined all the dots, and along the motorway Napier now has to pump water up hill so that we can drain much of Napier City during medium to heavy rainfall events. There are half a dozen pumps going continuously to keep the Landcorp Farm and Napier Airport above water. Napier is fortunate that an extended period of heavy rainfall has not coincided with a severe power outage.

With the climate change scenario of rising

seawater levels, the outlook is for greater saltwater intrusion inland, particularly when groundwater pressures decline. Summer low-flow periods in our rivers and lower ground water levels in the aquifers heighten the risk. Some wells put down for fresh water abstraction have come up with salt water several kilometres inland (e.g. Euchre Flats).

Many of our fresh water resources that were previously regarded as a public good are slowly but surely being transferred to private enterprise via resource consents to abstract water. What is left in the rivers is deemed to be sufficient for the rest of us, and for the aquatic ecosystem each river contains. Our rivers are supposedly managed for aquatic ecosystem purposes.

When river flows recede due to our extended summers and constant water abstraction, the remaining water warms up and the volume of algae increases rapidly. This is partly due to the concentration of nutrients that flow from the intensively farmed or cropped areas. There's a perception that this only happens during rainfall events, but it is also induced through irrigation over heavily-fertilised pastures and crops. The nutrients flow readily through the alluvial soils and into groundwater, which continues to do its thing, flowing along underground flow paths

and emerging into our rivers via springs.

Consequently, many of our favourite swimming holes ain't what they used to be, and previously unknown (for Hawke's Bay) species of toxic algae are becoming more prevalent. Natural biodiversity is slowly being displaced by more pollution-tolerant species.

For many years there has been a default limit on the application of nitrogenous fertilisers to land, of around 150 kilograms per hectare per year. But when you add in the amounts being added from intensive farming activity, then it is not surprising there is a steady buildup of nitrogen and phosphorus in both ground and surface waters. The control over adverse effects of activities on natural resources rests with regional councils, but there is a perception that they have been a bit lax in their duties in catchments like the Tukituki and Taharua.

Our regional plan defines a hazardous substance in accordance with the definition in the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act, 1996, which is -

*"Any substance—*  
*(a) With one or more of the following intrinsic properties:*

- (i) Explosiveness;
- (ii) Flammability;
- (iii) A capacity to oxidise;
- (iv) Corrosiveness;
- (v) Toxicity (including chronic toxicity);
- (vi) Ecotoxicity, with or without bioaccumulation; or

*(b) Which on contact with air or water (other than air or water where the temperature or pressure has been artificially increased or decreased) generates a substance with any one or more of the properties specified in paragraph (a) of this definition."*

In some circumstances, this could be applied to excessive fertiliser use, especially if toxic algae are a result. One of our kaumatua once mentioned that the best way to monitor the effects of land use activity would be to require water abstractors to get their domestic water downstream from their property. This would guarantee cleaner rivers for the rest of us. If carried through to ground water use, we could require them to use the shallow aquifers for their water supply. At the moment, they take the clean water from the deeper aquifers and discharge fertilisers and effluent above shallow ground water and into rivers to the detriment of the rest of us.

The use of nutrient budgets for catchments has been investigated rigorously since the mid-1990's, but due to its possible restriction on land-use intensification, has not been implemented. The use of water quality standards is also ticking away in the background at central government. They have already put out the standard for drinking water supply, but you need to be a scientist to understand most of it. In simple terms, adherence to the standard requires treatment of water to keep the contaminants below a set level. In practice, these levels often become a target instead of a maximum level and contamination is allowed to rise towards the set level. Then in some circumstances they allow for a few exceedences as well.

Water quantity is managed through minimum flows and allocatable volumes. The minimum flow for a river or stream is the "environmental bottom line" and when flows are lower than the minimum flow, water quality declines rapidly. Excessive abstraction ensures that the bottom line is reached more often and faster than previous. The control of fresh water, its

## What About Water?

**Why have rivers like the Tukituki and Ngaruroro been over-allocated for water abstraction?**

**Should a monetary value be placed on the water itself?**

**What water conservation measures should be in place for homes, businesses and farmers?**

**Should resource consents limit the use of fertilizers to protect water quality?**

**Will constrained water supply limit growth in HB in the future?**

**If we proceed with dams and water harvesting schemes, who should pay for them?**

management or mismanagement is causing tension not just in Hawke's Bay, but on the national front as well. Given current trends, we may soon have to stop calling it fresh.

The main problem with water management in New Zealand is that there is a lack of co-ordination and overall direction. For our coastal marine area we have the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement which regional authorities must give effect to, so there is the opportunity for consistency across the country. There is no parallel National Policy Statement or regulation for managing fresh water. Consequently fresh water management has been defined through regional planning and case law at the Environment Court.

The previous Labour government attempted to address the anomalies within water management through their Sustainable Water Programme of Action (2004), but they had a preference for taking advice and guidance from regional councils and industry, and the programme stalled. With the change of government, National's direction for water management has been clearly signaled with the drama in Canterbury and the sacking of their regional council. This was clearly in response to the Environment Canterbury approach to proposals for transferring large percentages of river water to private water companies. National's message to Environment Canterbury is "stop getting in the way of progress".

The general public and environmental groups in Canterbury have certainly made their position clear with the massive rally in opposition to the government's sacking of a democratically-elected council, and the appointment of commissioners to speed up the water and irrigation companies' plans.

Here in Hawke's Bay we are just getting into this type of stuff with proposals for several dams within the Tukituki and Ngaruroro catchments, and with the Mohaka dam proposal currently on hold. A water company structure has been promoted at HBRC and the feasibility studies for the Tukituki and Ngaruroro are well underway.

Further reforms to the Resource Management Act may restrict public participation as infrastructure and access to natural resources are given a higher priority than the public interest. It will be interesting to see what the Environmental Protection Agency does going forward, as they will be making the major decisions on matters deemed to be "in the national interest". The growth in regional economies could be construed as part of this picture, especially during the current recession.



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## CLEARVIEW ESTATE

### WINERY & RESTAURANT

# PROMISING GOOD GOVERNMENT

By TOM BELFORD

During the upcoming campaigns, candidates will put forward all sorts of proposals aimed at assuring voters that we will get more efficient and responsive local government ... if only *they* get the levers of control.

Some will associate themselves with ambitious schemes like amalgamation; others will insist that more determined cooperation and “shared services” among councils will suffice; still others might focus on improving public participation in council decision-making. All worthy of debate.

Most likely, there’s not a single Hawke’s Bay voter who doesn’t believe in their gut that local body effectiveness and accountability can and should be improved. So what are the possibilities, and what should voters be listening for as candidates promise they will raise the bar?

Consider these possibilities.

## More effective structure

Of course the most ambitious “reform” proposal on the table is “amalgamation” ... whatever that means. Some have in mind a unitary authority that might encompass the Regional Council as well as the region’s four territorial bodies – Hastings, Napier, Wairoa and CHB. Some would consider merging only the territorial bodies, on the basis that the Regional Council has certain responsibilities – like protecting the environment – that warrant it standing apart as a “check” on its territorial cousins. And, if you live in Napier, “amalgamation” might signify nothing more than getting in bed with odious Hastings!

Whatever flavour of amalgamation proponents advocate, the case rests on claims that include cost-savings; consistency of operating policies and practices (from building codes to dog control); simplification of doing business with local government as contractors, ratepayers, etc.; more effective planning and outcomes in areas like infrastructure, tourism promotion, economic development and settlement patterns; and more potent advocacy to central government.

Different candidates will emphasize different benefits. For example, some expect substantial cost savings; others expect virtually none.

And some candidates – skeptical of amalgamation – will argue that such benefits can be achieved by “evolution not revolution.” You will hear these candidates talk about “shared services” like rubbish removal, rates collection, computer systems and so on.

They claim that by simply focusing in a systematic manner on specific areas of opportunity, runs can be put on the board without the turmoil of wholesale reorganization and the loss of local community identity they associate with amalgamation. It’s simply a matter of applying common sense and political will, they say.

Voters need to hear and weigh all these arguments from the candidates (all have a stake in this one) and decide which path you would like to see taken over the next three years. Our current councils have set aside funds for “independent” examination next year of the pros and cons of amalgamation. The newly-elected councils will shape the direction this inquiry takes or, depending upon who is elected, drop the proposal as dead in the water. You get to decide!

## Holding companies

Another key “structural” issue involves how our councils manage key public assets – from sports and cultural facilities, to ports and airports, to real estate, water storage and forestry investments.

Different models are presently used or proposed by our local councils – separate trusts (like the

regional sports park), property development companies, corporate trusts (like the HB Opera House), limited liability corporations (like the Port), and holding companies (as the Regional Council proposes for some of its “strategic assets” like the Port).

The most common argument used to justify these entities is the desirability of involving pertinent business and commercial talent or broader community representation in strategy development and oversight of such public enterprises. Typically the question posed is: “What does your typical councillor know about running a port or marketing a sports or entertainment facility?”

Sometimes too, financial advantages, including tax benefits and protecting councils from liability, are claimed for these structures.

Critics, on the other hand, see these structures as further distancing the public (and even councillors) from participation in and adequate control over decision-making for entities that are managing valuable public assets. Some of the entities (like the HB Opera House and Hastings’ property development company) include both elected councillors and appointed members on their boards; others (like the Port) have only appointed directors.

And they can each still generate losses that ultimately come back to the “parent” council’s balance sheet, requiring ratepayer funding.

Given that the performance of some of the region’s most prominent assets is now – or is proposed to be – in the hands of such entities, voters should become more familiar with their workings, and develop a point of view about when and if they are desirable, and what public accountability measures need to be in place.

Regional council candidates especially should be questioned about HBRC’s proposed holding company – do they support or oppose it and why? And if they do support it, how do they see accountability to the Council (and ratepayers) being safeguarded?

## More transparent process

Candidates routinely promise that, if elected, they will improve public participation in councils’ decision-making. Carrying no downside, it’s a “throw-away” pledge easily made, but as easily

forgotten. Rarely does a candidate indicate with any specificity precisely what they would change to provide more transparency and accountability, staff responsiveness, or meaningful engagement with the public.

Here are some ideas you might use to prod candidates on this point. Ask if they would commit to any of the following:

*More recorded votes* – even after the rare strenuous debate on an important issue, it is uncommon for councillors to call for a recorded vote. There seems to be a tacit agreement that no footprints should be left behind.

*Fewer public-excluded sessions and “workshops”* – these can be sessions where the real debates occur and deals get made. When so much is done behind closed doors, public consultation becomes perfunctory and actions later taken in public session receive only cursory and sanitized open discussion.

*More productive and timely public consultation* – if a council requires a legal opinion to defend its claim that it has appropriately consulted on a major issue (as the Regional Council recently required for its Holding Company proposal), then it’s a safe bet that they haven’t honoured the spirit of public consultation!

Generally, councils should augment the broad and formal submission process on key issues with the involvement of targeted stakeholder groups and constituencies, genuine survey research, and “plain English” presentation and framing of choices.

Additionally, council hearings on submissions could be held in the evening (as should at least some council meetings). And matters of regional significance (e.g., budget support for sport facilities or arts & culture) or matters where policy consistency would be helpful (e.g., dog control, liquor by-laws) could be considered at joint meetings of the pertinent councils.

And what about “open mike” windows at council meetings, where members of the public would have limited time to put issues before their elected representatives on a routine basis?

*Better informed councillors* – As someone who attends many, many council meetings – Hastings, Napier, Regional – I am surprised time and again that councils are so ignorant about how their

opposite numbers are approaching the same issues ... or dealing with matters that could become contentious between them.

Short of amalgamation, Councillors could be assigned to “audit” relevant meetings of their “sister” councils or their committees. If, for example, you chaired the Hastings Environment & Development Committee, I can guarantee it would be smart and illuminating to review the agenda materials for the Regional Council’s counterpart committee!

Of course that would add to a councillor’s workload. But if an enterprising citizen can do it, why not a paid councillor? It’s too easy for councillors to complain about or blame the fellows “down the road” when they are in fact ignorant of what “the enemy” is actually doing. Better to grandstand than be informed.

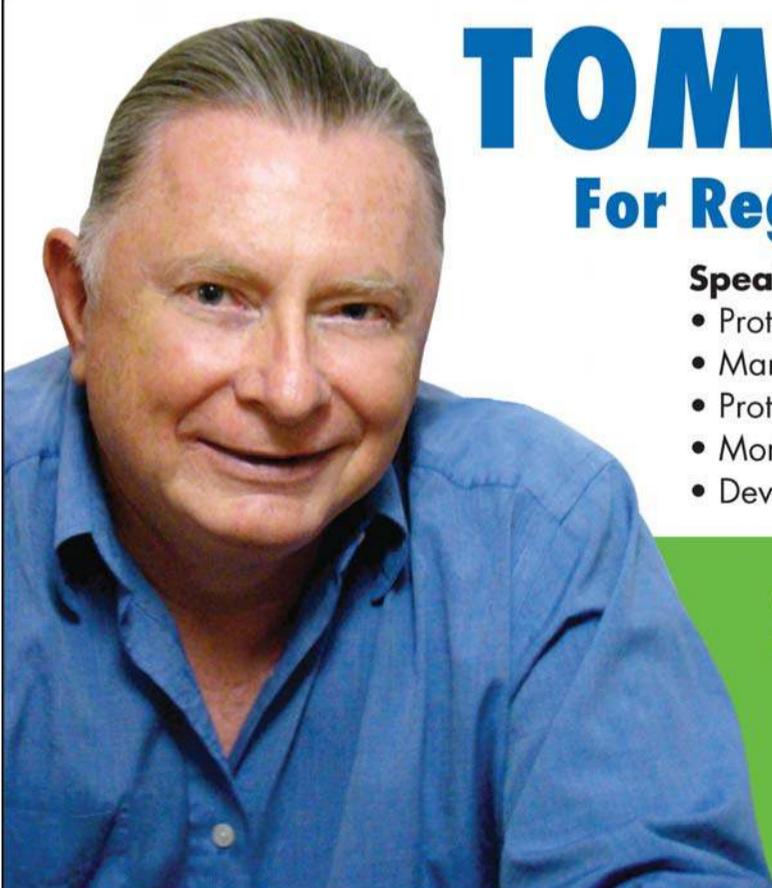
## Council cam

Finally, what if I as a council groupie could ask for anything? It might be web-streaming of council sessions! The Hastings Council once turned down my request to videotape a council session at my own expense (the infamous “go/no go” sports park debate, with Sam Kelt as ringmaster).

Hey, we can get webcam “eye candy” of Napier’s coast on the Napier Council site, why not something really useful? They do it at the Taupo District Council.

Sitting through hundreds of hours of council sessions, it’s plain to me that councillors try to “raise their game” when the media is on hand. Imagine if they thought they were being recorded for posterity and, worse, constituents might actually be watching live on their computers! What a challenge that would be those who rarely speak, who seem chronically unprepared, or are simply inept. There’s not a doubt in my mind that streaming video of council sessions would separate the wheat from the chaff ... and reveal which emperors have no clothes.

Hopefully this article offers ideas as to how you can probe candidates who promise they will make local government work better. Keep in mind, current councillors who have been around two terms or more have had plenty of opportunity *already* to deliver on that promise. Don’t ask them for more promises; ask for details on what “reforms” they have accomplished.



# TOM BELFORD

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# Speaking up for YOU!

AUTHORISED BY TOM BELFORD, 40 RARATU RD, HAVELOCK NORTH

# Healthy vote for nutrition

By Angela Hair and Phyllis Tichin

With the vote for District Health Board representatives just around the corner now is the time to have a public debate about the direction in which our health leaders are taking us.

The DHB Healthy Populations Plan addresses five health priorities: children, youth and family; mental health; older people; cancer; and chronic diseases. Immunisation, hygiene, early detection and appropriate medical intervention are key initiatives within the Plan.

Of the 18 Medical Health Officer's Public Health Advice posts on the DHB website, the majority deal with influenza and vaccination rates and only one addresses Healthy Eating, even though obesity is probably one of the most significant health issues contributing to type-2 diabetes, heart disease, cancer, respiratory problems and osteoarthritis.

Is this Healthy Population Plan achieving its goals or is another direction required?

One in three adults in NZ is overweight and one in four is obese. Twenty percent of children are overweight. People are living longer while an expensive publicly funded health system groans under the weight of major chronic illness.

Is there a more cost effective way of tackling these health problems?

Experiments such as the water fluoridation programmes of the 1950s were heralded to solve dental decay problems, yet 58 years later 75% of Hastings' 5 year old Maori children still have dental decay. Dr Weston A. Price was a dental researcher in the 1930s. He visited 22 New Zealand settlements to look at the teeth of over 500 Maori children and found those children in isolated communities living on their traditional diets of seafood, birds, ferns, kumara and pork had the best teeth and physical bodies of almost any population he had visited worldwide! The Maori children who were exposed to European diets of refined sugar and flour had abscesses, dental caries and missing teeth.

Dr Price found the same pattern throughout indigenous populations worldwide. Saturated

animal fats, organ meats, seafoods, whole milk, butter, cheese and cream, fermented whole grains and fibrous vegetables were the key ingredients in those traditional diets. There were no vegetable oils, margarines, additives, sugars, refined white flours, pastas, white rice or cereals.

What would have happened to our population 50 years ago if the medical authorities had come up with an effective nutrition programme and vigorously opposed sugar treats and fake oils? To be fair they did have Children's Health Camps and school milk – sadly the main reason why so many children of the 1950s can't stand milk today. Somewhere along the way a nutritional focus was dropped from the Public Health vocabulary in favour of vaccinations and public hygiene.

Last year, Health Minister Tony Ryall dropped nutrition and physical activity from the Government health targets. The Government also chopped the Obesity Action Coalition, Healthy Eating – Healthy Action regional coordinators, and healthy food in school programme. Clearly a regional programme for our local communities is the way forward on the obesity issue. Perhaps we need a local community sponsorship programme like World Vision has internationally. Our donations could target the 'nutrient starvation' that is happening all around us. Hawke's Bay could lead the nation in health statistics with an initiative to eat local, traditional, nutrient-dense food from our bountiful region.

Nutritionist Ben Warren and his Be Pure initiative in Flaxmere have demonstrated that obesity and diabetes can be reversed by removing sugar, excess carbohydrates and 'bad' vegetable oils from diets and putting back the 'good' fats our bodies need, like omega-rich grass-fed animal fat and seafood. Yes, it flies in the face of the food pyramid 'low fat/high carbs' diet. Tough as it is to admit we didn't get it quite right, Flaxmere's conclusive weight loss and improved blood sugar results show we need to head in a new direction.

We must ask ourselves – has being on low fat/ high carb diets for the last 40 years resulted in slimmer, healthier people on fewer medications? Can we remember even 20 years ago when obesity and diabetes were

not considered to be epidemics? If you're over 45 think back to how many children in your high school had cancer. How many do your children know in their schools that do? What we have been doing is not working. Let's consider the option of going back to the wise traditions of our great grandparents – quality saturated animal fats and protein, spray free produce, and fewer carbohydrates and artificial ingredients. Let's get back our health.

Who is going to lead that new direction toward nutrition for true health?

The root cause of disease is not bacteria, viruses or parasites. The root cause is immune and hormone systems that are compromised by poor nutrition. We pay our District Health Board to be the experts in health so it makes sense for them to be champions of a new focus. A new mother noted that a doctor 'encouraged' her to vaccinate her newborn 17 times in the space of one consultation! That's one motivated doctor. Imagine if the same 'push' was given to excellent nutrition as is given to achieving immunisation rates. Our population would be healthier, energised and happier and our health costs would plummet.

In Hawke's Bay we are fortunate to have some of the most versatile soils in the world, along with great sunshine hours and abundant water. We have farmers growing wonderful grass-fed sheep and cattle that are a good source of omega 3s and healthy saturated fats - the very fats we need for brain health for ourselves and our children.

Children with behavioural and learning difficulties, such as ADHD, benefit from having fish oils and could equally benefit from eating meat (without the hamburger buns), animal fat and organ meats from the animals we grow here in our own backyard.

These same farmers, grappling with pressure to improve their environmental footprints, have turned to innovative companies for advice on how to improve the nutrient density of their grass and produce.

They have healthier animals, smaller vets bills and more grass. They have experimented with homeopathic medicines for their dairy cows and found they offer cost-effective treatment thus reducing antibiotic use. Soil mineral

deficiency is a huge concern because it leads to depleted minerals in our food. The Royal Society of Chemists and the British Ministry of Agriculture findings from 2001 indicate a general overall average decline of 60% in vitamin and mineral content in our fruits and vegetables in the past 50 – 60 years.

Iodine for instance is essential for brain development in babies and children, healthy thyroid function and breast health in adults. The public health response is to encourage people to use iodised salt which also contains aluminum – a mineral we don't want to accumulate. Iodised salt provides only one of the two forms of iodine we need for thyroid and breast health. Seaweed, seafood, fish and food grown with mineral rich fertilisers is a better way to ensure we get the right amount of iodine.

Chemical toxins from agricultural sprays, plastics, industrial processing and additives to our food are a major negative factor to many people's health. The benefits of fluoride are debated around the world, but one thing everyone agrees – too much is poisonous! Fluoride is a toxic halogen that suppresses the uptake of iodine, which most of us are functionally deficient in. The quality of our nutrition affects the quality of our teeth. If after 58 years of administering fluoride we still have a 75% caries rate in the key target population of Maori children, perhaps we could come at this problem from a better perspective and deal with the basic building blocks of dental health – nutrient dense food.

As Henare O'Keefe says about his Flaxmere health project, "It's all about education". Who better to educate our local people about what will make them feel better, have healthier children and have more fun in life, than the people who run our DHB!

So how will this year's DHB candidates get that message out there and find the funds to put in an innovative health programme that will take us to consistent levels of wellness? Now is the time to ask the tough questions of our representatives so that they can bravely initiate programs that will lead us all to being healthy, active and brimming with nutrients.



## ANNE WILSON-HUNT HASTINGS WARD, HASTINGS DISTRICT COUNCIL

### My Skills I Bring to Council:

- ✓ Hardworking and community focused
- ✓ Three years experience as Councillor
- ✓ Qualified Commissioner for Resource Management Act Hearings
- ✓ Tertiary qualifications in Science and Social Policy
- ✓ Strong advocate for sustainability
- ✓ A good listener with a practical work ethic and common sense logic

### My goals for the next 3 years:

- Environment:** Make responsible decisions that will protect and enhance our environment for future generations
- Community:** A safe and vibrant community that is inclusive and helps to empower responsible residents
- Economy:** Support new and existing businesses to grow so they may positively contribute to both regional economies and local communities



### My Current Role in Our Community

Current Hastings District Councillor for the Hastings Ward and Commissioner on HDC Hearings Committee—Manager of CreARTs Incorporated providing creative opportunities for young people & beneficiaries—Mother of four children and wife to Barry (Paramedic with St John)—Trustee for several youth and child focused Trusts in Hastings including Chairperson of Ebbett Park School BOT—Hastings Community Patroller—Chairperson of Safe Hastings Advisory Committee, Deputy Chair Community Services Committee and Council representative on a wide range of Committees including Cycling Strategy Group, Hastings City Marketing Executive, Maori Joint Committee, Heritage Trails, Crime Prevention Governance Group, Regional Sports Park Advisory Group & Creative Hastings

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# Spell-binding jersey removes fear

The descriptions of sports teams are used to unify and enthuse.

For example All Blacks. All Whites, Black sticks, Silver Ferns, Kiwis.

I think that I can safely promote that upon hearing any of these descriptors I am warmed by the feeling of unity, patriotism, loyalty and citizenship, of belonging, of being at home. Measure this against descriptions like Maori, Pakeha, Black, Samoan, Iraqi or Arab ... then we are divided, uncertain even fearful. Why?

At a friendly meeting the other day with a pakeha (I prefer this word rather than non-Maori), I was informed that fear still existed about the role of Maori, particularly the Maori party; and especially that Hone Harawira. If only we were not so radical, so non-conforming, so Maori.

What was evident was that fear remains. In today's environment fear still exists regarding Maori. The impression clearly was one of: Maori want everything their way; and take, take, take. Look at those treaty settlements...

Oh how far we have travelled to not have moved at all.

I am reminded of a parable I once told regarding being a Kiwi, a description many are finding comfortable and that sits well with them. Yet when quizzed as to what was a Kiwi, many could not give a description other than tomato sauce, and the TV ad proclaiming I am proud to be a Kiwi by an Indian immigrant. Simply the story goes like this.

In the days of Jonah Lomu, Josh Cronfeild, Taine Randell, and Tana Umanga, we effectively had Tongan, Dutch, Maori, Samoan, and pakeha all playing for the AB's. In preparing for a game against say, Aussie, these players reverently dress themselves in the colours of the AB's and make their way onto the playing field. The first thing that happens after the cheering, many would say, is that they do the Haka. Wrong they assemble for the national anthem and then make their way to the centre of the field for the Haka. Anyway the game is played in the normal non-compromising fashion of the two nations and this time the ABs are successful. Not at any time during the game do I hear any voice cry Jonah the Tongan, or Taine the Maori or Tana the Samoan. All I hear is All Blacks All Blacks. Fantastic!!!

At the end of the game something absolutely significant occurs. It is no longer practised I hasten to add. The teams swap jerseys. At this moment Jonah the AB becomes Jonah the Tongan, Taine the AB becomes Taine the Maori. They have taken off the mantle of the Jersey. They have removed that one spell binding symbol that unifies us unashamedly as Kiwis, New Zealanders. The fear was removed during the time the Jersey was being worn. Think about it.

So what has this to do with my article? Well it must be about removing the fear that continues to dictate racial intolerance or indifference in this country. Maori want just



**DES RATIMA**  
columnist

as much as Pakeha to live harmoniously in this country, having earned the rights of citizenship alongside our comrades in arms, having been here to welcome the ancestors of our Pakeha people, having successfully embraced each other on the sports field, and in the bed room. Yet there is still the divide created by fear. We must change this. This generation must take responsibility to change this.

I will add quickly, this does not mean one dominating the other. This has been tried already and was called colonisation, and assimilation. No, the new way is still partnerships, sharing and understanding. If people choose not to leave the perceived safety of their four walls then this cannot occur. If people do not choose to learn the Maori language, just as Maori were required to learn English (for which I am eternally grateful), if people choose not to understand, then the fear will remain.

Politicians must lead the way in this important endeavour. They must demonstrate at every opportunity through their actions, speech and policies that they are prepared to lead the way. It is more important now as treaty claims

are nearing settlement, with the economic benefits that will bring to communities, Maori and Pakeha. As we enter the 2010 local body elections, pathways of working together are essential for everyone. The message must not be diluted by referring to the mass as a multi-cultural society. This is a red herring and not worthy of debate.

Chris Finlayson, Minister for Treaty Settlements, has offered a way forward with regards to river management in the Hawke's Bay region. A cooperative partnership between Hapu Iwi and Regional Council, a committee evenly matched with Maori and Councillors, similar to the Hastings District Council/Maori Joint Committee. The difference being that the HDC model is not representative of Hapu or Iwi.

The HDC Joint committee make recommendations to Council. I believe that where hapu and iwi are involved, it should be at the governance board table to make the decisions, not just the recommendations. It becomes more of the same otherwise. To use a phrase I once heard at Regional Council, 'Maori are being shoehorned into the structure (HB Regional)'.

This is not the basis for a good sustainable relationship and is definitely not what I am advocating.

For their part, Maori are attempting -- I think successfully -- to reshape themselves for the future. Having understood the advantages of

governance and economic muscle, Maori want to define themselves within the context of the next decade and the flow on effect of treaty settlements.

Nga Marae O Heretaunga is one such body. Nga Marae O Heretaunga is using the collective experience and shared aspirations to enhance the way in which Maori are able to advocate at the highest levels and bring benefits directly to whanau. It is a bottom up approach where whanau are the centre of everything.

It preceded the Whanau Ora initiative recently launched, but embraces the opportunities now available for unprecedented good to arrive at the doorsteps of our whanau. Nga Marae O Heretaunga is a movement not a monument. It does not have ivory towers of habitation. Nga Marae has been meeting in the debating chamber of the Hastings District Council, associating themselves with the culture of Council and the need to understand and exist within these environments.

Examples of Maori adaption through understanding and experiencing are evident in the education and health systems. I have yet to see an understanding reached purely without any advocacy from Maori for change. It seems that only when Maori persist that changes are considered, and then Maori are seen as agitators of change rather than the more positive advocate for change. Understanding is misunderstood.

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# Measuring health of BAY SPORT

By Wayne Bradshaw  
Hastings district councillor

Sport, like most things, has changed significantly over the years.

In my earlier years, I was actively involved in hockey (played then on grass fields not turf), both as a player and an administrator. My club, Akina Rovers, was strong and competitive on the field and had an equally strong and active social side.

Fundraising and volunteer work played a large part of all Sport in those days for uniforms, trips, etc. An example ...

In the early 1980s, Akina Rovers shared the Havelock North Rugby Clubrooms at Anderson Park and the two clubs worked together to fundraise and extend the Clubrooms to include the Gym area now occupied by Peak Fitness. It was hard work, professional managers and Gaming Trusts did not exist then.

Peach picking, sausage sizzles, Calcutta fundraising nights and other inventive ways to get a dollar were undertaken all by volunteers; but it was fun and it worked. Over time some of these historical necessities of sporting life have been diminished with the availability of gaming machines and trusts and the funds that these provided.

The community gaming trusts exploded onto the scene and provided sizeable funds to be distributed to community organisations. Initially the principal benefactors were sporting clubs and organisations. These funds could be used for such things as salaries, operational costs, capital projects and programs. This created the opportunity for Sports to grow and build facilities, provide professional administration staff, and maintain the costs of participation at stable levels ... lower than the actual costs.

The benefactors of the community gaming trusts have changed over time. Whilst Sports initially featured heavily, other community activities such as culture, heritage, environment and health now receive significant contributions. In addition to this, the amount of funds available for distribution by the community gaming trusts has also reduced due to government action, less gaming machines and the general economic downturn.

“The funding available (in NZ) from community gaming trusts in 2009 was an estimated \$57

million less than it was in 2004. A continuation of this trend will further reduce community funding by an estimated \$50 million by 2014.” \$300 million annually in community funding (in NZ) comes from community gaming trusts. [Lion Foundation e-news July 2010.]

“Here in HB (anecdotal) there has been a 15-20 % decline of available funds over the last few years, but things are now stabilising.” [Colin Stone, Sport HB, June 2010.]

From my enquiries, the decline in available funds for sporting organisations in Hawke’s Bay from the community gaming trusts could be in excess of 30% .

Add to this the increased competition for the limited and declining community gaming trust funding between community sectors, new high-value capital projects as against existing operational requests, and you will see a sector that is facing a major funding dilemma.

Who will miss out? How does the community prioritise in the face of declining resources?

Our question has to be: “What can we do about it?”

This decline in funding opportunities for Sport appears to have been visibly evident over the past few years. You would have hoped that some work was being done on this issue.

The lead organisation in addressing this situation should be Sport Hawke’s Bay, which is the regional body charged with the coordination of Sport in Hawke’s Bay. As such, they need to understand the financial health of each sport organisation in Hawke’s Bay and each of these organisations should then understand the financial health of the clubs they represent.

Sport HB needs to ensure that a Regional Plan of Action is formulated to address the consequences of this funding dilemma. This plan of action should address: fundraising and volunteer support; alternative funding and administration options; potential for a regional funding model; objectives and operations of Sport HB; and so forth.

Over the past decade, Hawke’s Bay and Hastings District Council have had a large number of strategic documents prepared to address the infrastructure of Sport in the District and Region. These include:

HB Regional Sport and Recreation Strategy (Sport HB, 2004); Reserves Strategy (HDC, 2006); Play Strategy (HDC, 2004); Walking Strategy (HDC, 2004); Cycling Strategy (HDC, 2001); Pools Review (HDC, 2010); Sports Fields & Indoor Facilities Review (HDC, 2003); Recreation Plan Review & Current Situation (HDC, 2007); Regional Sports Park (HDC, 2006).

[I have not included Napier in the above; they however seem to have a long term strategy based around Park Island.]

The 2007 Recreation Plan Review highlighted netball, rugby, soccer and hockey as the most common winter sports. Key barriers to participation are lack of time and/or energy, cost too much, too hard to get there, safety. HB has a high participation rate, yet HB is identified as the unhealthiest region in NZ (in specific diseases). And there is a strong link between high levels of deprivation and health and crime issues.

Other than the Regional Sports Park , no other plans have been put in place to address the issues raised in this review.

While rugby was identified as one of the most popular winter sports, no real provision to increase the number of rugby grounds in the District has been made. Since the sale of Nelson Park (Hastings’ premier rugby ground), the only new rugby sportsground is a privately owned and funded ground on Ellwood Road, owned jointly by HB Polo and Hastings Rugby and Sports Club.

The Ellwood ground has recently received some funding from the Hastings council of \$75,000 for capital development in 2009, and \$20,000 towards ground maintenance in 2010.

With the demographic changes forecast for Hawke’s Bay, climate change, transport issues and the desire to provide a sustainable environment, it is important that the Hastings council adopt a plan of providing sporting facilities close to the communities that will use them. This will enable better utilisation, safer and healthier communities, and reduce the barriers to participation.

### Example: Havelock North

Over the past 40 years Havelock North’s population has grown from some 6000 to 11000+. This represents the majority of the residential growth in the Hastings District, but not one new sports ground has been added. In the last 5 years,

the local Rugby Club has grown its membership from some 240 to over 400, with significant Junior players.

### Example: Flaxmere

Currently in Flaxmere there are six soccer grounds (2 each for Senior, Intermediate and Junior) spread over two parks. If some of these grounds are transferred to the Regional Sports Park, will this cause any issues with transportation, costs, or safety, as all have been highlighted as barriers to participation? Will this preclude Flaxmere soccer players from participating?

### Example: Touch Rugby

At present the Regional Sports Park is the intended centre for touch rugby in summer. Currently, there are nine touch rugby grounds in the District (Ron Giorgi Park, Flaxmere-5 and Bill Matthewson Park, Hastings-4). Will these existing grounds not be used for touch once the Regional Sports Park is operational?

### How to Remedy?

What we need is an up-to-date inventory of HB sport and recreation facilities, with an infrastructure plan for Sport – together with a budget for true operating and capital expenditures – that covers the aspirations of all of the people of Hastings District and Hawke’s Bay. The underlying principles should include: sustainability; building strong communities from within; making Sport accessible; having a viable funding model for Sport.

What might that funding model look like? We need to inventory the potential sources of funding:

- Central Government;
  - Users (will they need to pay more?);
  - Voluntary fundraising (implemented in some kind of combined campaign);
  - Gaming Trusts (we need to decide our desired degree of dependence on these funds);
  - Other -- e.g., tithing of major sporting events, facilities rental for national/international events.
- Looking realistically at these sources, we then need to quantify the gap between our Sports needs and ratepayers’ ability and willingness to pay for this sector on an ongoing basis. And we must adjust our Sport aspirations accordingly. That’s my view. What do others have to say?!

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# Councils, arts and culture

By Jacob Scott

In considering the health of our creative and cultural community in HB, what's first apparent are the great assets provided by the private sector wineries, with their open venues and concerts profiling the Bay as a vibrant lifestyle community. We owe a lot to them for establishing this color and energy ... and they could do with more support. There's also a rich network of marae, cultural hubs in their own right – a huge resource of constant activity, history and stimuli. Deco also adds an interesting dimension.

We're very lucky to have this wealth of culture and creativity all around us. In fact there's so much going for the Bay that it stands out as a special region with real potential for development.

Then there are the region's public facilities -- the Opera House, Napier Municipal, Napier Museum and Hastings Art Gallery. These are basic public facilities that you'd expect in any region, and the local bodies' responsibility to provide.

While it all looks good for short-term visitors, there are inherent problems that with a bit of attention could really make a difference. It's frustrating to see all the wonderful elements here struggling to get over the threshold. Collectively, our region's Local Authorities seem tentative and unclear about how to really utilise the assets to improve our own economic and social wellbeing.

Through my work as an artist/designer/educator, there's not a week I'm not interacting with an educational institution, Iwi or council. It's not hard to see that there's a need for a culture shift within these organisations. If this changed, a whole lot of possibilities would materialise. Good leadership and a commitment to a vision are essential.

There is agreement among peers that in this time of economic stress the creative sector may have some answers. Use of creative process and design thinking to revolutionise business and organisations is a hot and proven global phenomenon.

Over the past six years I've been working with others on a national project to bring design, culture and business together. We've established some understanding of the issues within organisations that inhibit development.

These issues are apparent within our own local bodies. Compliance focused and unable to manage growing powers with growing vision. If there's no box to tick, they seem unable to make any decisions. They continually scope options using outside consultants, but don't follow the advice.

Gatekeeping is a huge issue – entrenched staff in positions of authority and comfort resist change and are skeptical of the unknown. Change means work. But most departments operate in silos making collaboration between departments or organisations very difficult. Bureaucratic, political and institutional constraints feel impenetrable, even to top staff. Change seems impossible without immense effort over a long period of time. What is written in mission statements and objectives is not being practiced within organisations. Institutions and staff appear fearful of entering territory where there is little precedent or 'published' knowledge, and the potential for 'ignorance' to be revealed. Finding staff with the necessary attributes to deliver in the public sector with low salary caps is difficult.

Under these circumstances, our institutions can be more trouble than they're worth. Something needs to change.

Providing arts, culture and heritage amenities is mandatory for councils. Hawke's Bay is managed by three authorities each with their own approach. There is no connection or collaboration between any of the players and that seems crazy ... and an area of opportunity.

## Hastings – Slow Off the Mark

Hastings District Council has a large and diverse area to cover and an interesting mix of culturally-connected businesses like wineries and food producers that need to be valued. The inputs and qualities they bring to the region's culture with

their venues and activities really underwrite the HB experience. They've filled the gap for a while, but now they're struggling. It's time for Hastings itself to develop some energy.

In the beginning of this three-year term, councillors endorsed a new vision for the arts and a new director, but they were frustratingly slow getting out of the blocks, with middle management gatekeepers not sharing the vision of the governors. It wasn't till a much needed restructure that things began to move. Only now is the gallery able to begin to show just what's possible with a shift in culture.

There's real potential here for an investment that could make a difference. Imagine a real contemporary, vibrant, culturally stimulated and connected Hastings centre with innovative design workshops linked into businesses developing products and services.

The Iwi have a strong cultural build programme through their marae, equipping them with knowledge and skills to function with cultural confidence. This is a now an unmeasured regional asset. Ten years ago Ngati Kahungunu put an offer to HDC to work with them on a new cultural centre, but the experience of the slow walk has led Kahungunu to explore an exciting option for themselves and Hastings may have missed the bus.

The Landmarks programme is another example – a positive initiative from Jeremy Dwyer's time as mayor but sadly it seems to have fallen into a bottom drawer.

Flaxmere is rearing its head, wanting positive cultural identity and action. Good things are going on there. Now's the time for HDC to activate their staff skills and come up with a culturally relevant solution.

On a positive level the new Hastings CEO has initiated this restructure to make a cultural shift. HDC has scored well poaching some good staff from Napier, but now the loss to Napier is very apparent.

## Napier – Locked into Deco

Napier is a tidy little unit locked into its deco heritage. Its establishment as the tidy boutique city has shown what can be achieved with a bit of vision, passion, energy and follow through. Leadership there have evolved a unique and special relationship working with and supporting developers for win-win solutions.

Congratulations to Napier for getting together the resources for a new Museum & Art Gallery. Now's the time for Napier to give us a dose of the best of the rest – to show what else is out in the world,

bring other ideas to town. The slogan on the big billboard says "For Us – to build a home worthy of our collections & exhibitions." The exhibition policy of this new facility is going to be crucial. There are the museum and earthquake stories to be told and the Bay has a significant asset of Maori Taonga that never see the light of day.

Douglas Lloyd Jenkins is calling desperately for Napier to foster more diversity to encourage the pretty city to move forward. Having built its Deco persona, Napier now has a difficult future to negotiate, with "Historic Places" clasped on buildings and spaces that will need to be able to evolve. There's a delicate balance to be struck between preservation and reason that will continue to need careful Council and community facilitation and innovative design.

## Other Players

I can't get a handle on the Regional Council's role in all of this. I feel that they should be coordinating or facilitating the whole with an overview, but I'm at a loss to identify anything that they really do for our arts and culture.

Creative HB brings us a very small set of talks each year and facilitates the printing of an art trail brochure, but that's about it. We have a province that really could mix it as an identity, but it's going to need some serious strategic work and investment to coordinate initiatives and to help market Hawke's Bay's own professional artists outside of the region.

Many agree that tertiary education in the arts has slipped over the past decade into being a control-managed commodity. There's a lot that EIT could be doing with its programme. Let's hope the newly appointed Head of School can convince managers to move to a more relevant and connected applied programme. The facilities are there, but like the councils, an internal cultural shift is required to provide returns to community, society and industry. The High Schools, under-equipped and resourced, seem to be disaster zones for creativity or innovation.

The answers are at our fingertips – within our unique cultural makeup there are processes and ways of doing things that involve and include community. If our leaders develop some confidence to think local, think relevance and think connections, there's a chance we could manage the relationships between the key players and the community to be more effective and sustainable. Let's hope in the next term Councillors can establish clarity, activate their staff, foster collaborations, and take some positive action to capitalise on what's here in the Bay.

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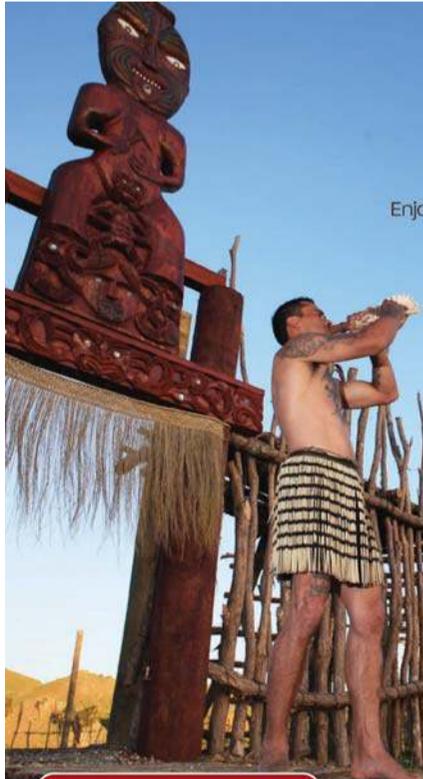
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# Growing clever ideas

Like most people of my generation (some call it Generation X), I've always been pretty apathetic about local body politics. I understand that for baby-boomers who grew up in the 60s and 70s, politics was (and probably still is) an endlessly fascinating subject, but it's never grabbed me.

Perhaps it was the student politicians at university that put me off small-time politics. Anyone who has been to university in New Zealand in the last 20 years will know what I'm talking about.

But as I approach the big four-zero, I'm grudgingly starting to take an interest in this stuff, much as an immigrant to these shores finds that learning the intricacies of rugby makes the New Zealand psyche a lot easier to understand.

Hawke's Bay politics is important to me because I live here. I've been living here for four years and I like it so much, I'll probably spend the rest of my life here.

I own a business called Mogul in Havelock North with my wife George. We're digital marketing experts. In other words, we make websites and email newsletters and help businesses with their social media strategies. The business is going from strength to strength (touch wood) and hopefully it will become part of the fabric of Hawke's Bay.

So, as a business owner, I'm desperate to see policies that will encourage the economic development of the region. We need to see more innovation and entrepreneurship, more new



**Matt Miller**  
columnist

business ventures, more world-class companies based here, and more skilled workers attracted to the region.

My children will also live in Hawke's Bay for the foreseeable future, since the schools are first-rate and the region is just a great place for kids to grow up. There are lots of parks for them to play in; there isn't much traffic so they can ride bikes everywhere; the climate is very kid-friendly; and apart from the occasional siege of a steroid-crazed gunman, the place has a nice safe feel to it.

So I've put down some roots here and I better start getting involved in who makes the decisions.

The next question is: what does the council actually do, other than rubbish collection, parking fines and dog control? They must have some input into the management of the environment, with water quality and coastal erosion seeming to get a lot of press lately. Water quality is a massive issue and it's probably a lot bigger than most people realise. They say the next big war won't be fought over oil, it will be fought over fresh water.

Unfortunately, our economy relies heavily on

dairy farming and cows don't seem to mix very well with fresh lakes and rivers. So this is just one place where economic development comes up against the need to protect the environment.

Water quality is important for that other great economic driver, tourism. This was illustrated for me just recently when I met one of our neighbours for the first time (we moved last week). The first question he asked me was whether I like fishing. The reason he asked was that he has a fishing lodge near Patangata.

It turns out the lodge is a nice little earner and is always full with tourists. And foreign people who go fly-fishing are usually flush with cash. Just look at Paul Reynolds from Telecom. If the water quality goes down the gurgler, that will be the end of my neighbours' fishing lodge, unless they could turn it into a Brokeback Mountain-style mountain retreat. There you go, there's some innovative thinking for you.

Air pollution is something we've been hearing about lately too. I personally think the air here in Hawke's Bay is fine. Mind you, I grew up in Christchurch in the 70s and 80s, so my lungs probably resemble a Cuban ashtray.

What else? Law and order, I suppose. And social development. The two go hand in hand, don't they? I think Henare O'Keefe is doing a great job at the grassroots level in Flaxmere and it's excellent to see Taine Randell lending his support to the MAC rugby club and the anti-obesity initiative. The 60 Minutes segment gave me a real buzz. I love to see people becoming proud again.

As well as grassroots support, we also need to attract and nurture superstars. By superstars, I mean real achievers and thought leaders who

live here in Hawke's Bay. We've unearthed quite a few lately. There's Rod Drury, the two Kims (Thorp and Wicksteed – Mad Men through and through), Dick Frizzell, Hal Josephson, Taine Randell. Ian 'Stockley' Smith is always promoting Hawke's Bay when he commentates. Lawrence Yule seems to be very well-regarded. The Evers-Swindell twins - are they still here?

Who else can we attract to the region? Why would they stay here? What makes Hawke's Bay a viable place for a global player to set up shop?

We have the lifestyle. Of that I'm sure. But we need more. Infrastructure is crucial here. The runway extension is great news, but we need superfast Internet connections. Then geography ceases to be the deal-killer that it used to be. We can videoconference all day long and collaborate with teams around the world using applications we haven't even dreamt of yet.

The opportunity is huge. As a country, we need to move away from the role of primary producer and become a highly skilled provider of high-quality, high-value products and services. And Hawke's Bay is just the same. So we're not just growing grass any more. We're growing ideas. When the sun is shining and the air is clean and I can see snow on the tops of the mountains, I can think pretty clearly.

Let's make Hawke's Bay a place for clever people to create great things that people pay lot of money for.

Then we'll have some cash and then -- who knows? -- we could build the biggest sports park in the world if we really want to.

# Halting downward spiral

Ideally, election issues reflect the concerns of the community. The community then votes in the people best qualified for sorting them out.

Identifying the issues is therefore vital. It is also very difficult. Issues can be manufactured, distorted and manipulated by interest groups, the press, the civil service and by politicians themselves.

The machinery of government is especially dangerous. Councils and government have unlimited resources, giving them a huge head start in pushing debate and discussion in the particular direction that suits them, and in stifling or minimising areas of discussion that



**Tim Gilbertson**  
columnist

do not bear close or unwelcome scrutiny for whatever reason.

Clarity of thought, logical analysis, long term vision, serious cost-benefit analysis, and a holistic approach should rank high in both choice of issues and choice of representatives. But often inertia and apathy are the prime ingredients of

electoral success.

So what are the current issues?

There is only one major long term issue, as far as I can see.

That is the slow, steady, downward spiral that provincial New Zealand has endured for the past forty years ... and which shows no sign of abating.

The cause is the centralising of political power in Wellington and economic power in Auckland. We can have the cleanest air, the purest water, the finest wine and the best gannet colony in the world, but as long as the population of Auckland and the civil service keep expanding, long term we are toast!

How do you counter that influence? By

intelligent, united, and sustained advocacy and strong representation at both local/regional and national level, in conjunction with responsible, well-organised sector groups. Backed up by sound scholarship.

Everything else -- cleaner water, fresher air, economic development, public transport, investment income -- can be dealt with through existing processes and policies, which need to be implemented rather than talked about. They will all eventually be solved, one way or another.

The wholesale decline of provincial New Zealand will not stop unless local citizens make a conscious and sustained effort to halt the decline, and re-establish Hawke's Bay at the centre of the beating heartland of New Zealand.

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*one cottage... many possibilities!*

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