Press statement from Rex Graham 10th June 2021

I have resigned as the chair and as a councillor from the HBRC.

I have been very honoured and proud to lead this council which during both terms has been made up of some very special people. It has been a very happy time for me driving change for the betterment of our region but sadly my health has other ideas and I can no longer give the energy and commitment that is required to properly serve this council and this community.

This current regional council has some exceptional young people who will lead our region into the future.

We collectively helped our new CEO to change the management environment building a team that is envied around the country for their intellect, dedication and commitment. They will continue to drive an environmental agenda.

Regional parks have always been high on my priority list and and I am really proud of my role in developing the Waitangi Regional park with its magical celestial compass and the growing Hawea Park at Pakowhai which started with a hand shake with my good mate Ngahiwi Tomoana.

We continue on the program of improving our waterways with a huge financial investment in this year’s LTP, but it’s going to be a long journey which others must drive.

The “Right Tree Right Place” is an internationally recognised legacy program and the new LTP continues the investment into our environment

In my first term as chair the council made the courageous decision to stop drilling oil and gas near our waterways which essentially stopped all oil exploration on the Heretaunga plains. We lead the nation on this and it is one of my proudest moments

I am very happy that we finally got the creation of Maori wards across the line and it was really gratifying that the vote was unanimous. I have greatly enjoyed my involvement with Tangata whenua and despite some cross words at times I have made some really great and enduring friendships.

I have also enjoyed my involvement with the region’s four mayors and I can assure you that the region is in very capable and safe hands.

I am particularly proud of my involvement in the Napier Port IPO which enabled the port to build a new wharf and at the same time strengthen the councils balance sheet which is $200m better off as a result of this deal.

In politics you don’t win all the battles and I remain disappointed that we continue to permit the burning of green wood which pollutes our air, especially on the Heretaunga plains with its strong inversion layers.

My agenda was always to create balance between the region's economic growth and environmental sustainability. To help maintain a dynamic and growing economy that must work in harmony with our environment and to ensure that we leave nobody behind.

I wish the council well in selecting their new chair and achieving their own unique agenda for the good of our environment and all the people in HB.

And finally I would like to thank those people who supported my campaigns over the last three elections, I couldn’t have done it without you.

It’s been a great journey and I have few regrets but circumstances change and I must now focus on my health and spend time with my family.

Rex Graham