

BAYBUZZ

BayBuzz Questions for HB Regional Council Candidates

Do you believe HBRC is ‘tough enough’ in enforcing environmental protections when challenging actions (or omissions) by other HB councils and businesses?

Hastings/HN constituency

Conrad Waitoa: Environmental protection cannot be compromised. HBRC has made progress in policy and enforcement, but from the outside, a stronger and more consistent approach is needed when holding councils and businesses to account. That includes ensuring freshwater quality, wetland health, and air emissions are safeguarded. Transparency, compliance monitoring, and public reporting all matter. I stand for your local vote to strengthen environmental accountability from within, not from the sidelines.

Bruce Mackay: Typically no. The examples that come to mind is the renewing of the discharge consent issued to the CHBDC for overflow from the oxidation ponds. The other is a policy sometimes discussed but not enacted that would require rainwater collection and storage for all new builds.

Sophie Siers: Yes, I do. If the level of prosecutions by Council is anything to go by then we are one of the toughest in the country.

Jock Mackintosh: At times we have been too tough and at other times not tough enough. Illegal burning is a good example of the latter. It’s much more than a nuisance – it is a serious health issue as anyone with a respiratory complaint will tell you. Trouble is, the fines, which are decided by central government, are too small and don’t deter people from doing it. This and other illegal activity is going to be an increasing issue and funding of prevention will be harder as the Council keeps a lid on rates. So community support is going to be more important than ever.

Napier constituency

Neil Kirton: HBRC has limited ability to enforce environmental standards on other councils. Fines issued for breaching waste and storm water consents and opposition to poor planning decisions have failed to deter our councils.

Non-compliant storm water discharges, poor upkeep of drinking water infrastructure and non-compliant wastewater treatment by Hawke’s Bay councils and some industries, continue to produce serious harm to the environment and affect people’s health.

Law changes are likely to be the only way to enforce higher environmental protection standards.

Paul Bailey: I’ll answer this question in two parts. Firstly, the challenge with undertaking enforcement action against other councils is purely political. If the other council does not respond to a ‘soft’ approach and a fine is imposed or legal action taken then the public just views that as wasting rate money. This doesn’t mean that action should not be taken, it is just that public benefit needs to be taken into account.

Secondly, whilst I don't think the approach HBRC takes with businesses is necessarily wrong, it does need to be more expedient with a firmer approach taken in a more timely manner. How many warnings need to be given before fines are imposed or legal action taken? I believe the issue here is one of having the resources to collect sufficient evidence to meet any legal test required to take stronger action. In this respect we should review the resources of the enforcement team and if necessary increase them.

Hinewai Ormsby: We have made progress, but no, I don't believe we are consistently tough enough. As Chair, I've worked to sharpen our regulatory approach – especially in the face of pollution and land-use practices that damage our rivers, estuaries, and coastlines. But we must go further. Protecting our environment sometimes requires courageous conversations with other councils and big players. That's leadership. Compliance and enforcement are only part of it – we also need stronger partnerships, shared accountability, and transparent decision-making. Our whenua and our people deserve no less.

Hayley Browne: It's a tricky balance. We need to be firm and fair, whether it's a business or another council. In my view, education should come first, but when harm is serious or repeated, we have to be willing to escalate. Councillors don't get involved in individual cases, it's our job to set clear policy, make sure the compliance team has the resources they need, and hold them to account for applying the rules consistently.

Syed Khurram Icbal: No. HBRC's failure to prosecute nitrate breaches (35% aquifers exceed limits) or enforce the Tukituki Plan proves systemic weakness. As Environmental Commissioner, I'll mandate binding caps in resource consents and redirect fines to riparian buffers—ending lax oversight.

Louise Parsons: HBRC should start by looking in its own backyard. I live down the road from an unconsented hardfill operation right next to a river mouth, it's full of roading waste from Higgins and, buried deep beneath it, remnants of Napier Hospital. In some places, it's built up to 12 metres high.

This hardfill site unconsented and unmonitored by HBRC acted like a dam during Cyclone Gabrielle turning it into a deadly blockage that made the flooding worse. That's not just failure, its negligence. The cyclone washed old roading into the ocean, another environmental failure on HBRC's watch. They're tasked to protect our region, not turn a blind eye. HBRC has known about this site for years yet only issued abatement notices *after* the disaster. That's shutting the barn door after the horse has bolted.

We can't expect accountability from others when the Council fails to act on its own responsibilities.

This is just one example, so no, I don't believe HBRC are effective enough in managing and enforcing environmental protections against councils and businesses.

CHB constituency

Tim Aitken: From my own experience as an oyster farmer in Mahurangi I've seen the damage weak enforcement can cause. Repeated sewage spills into the harbour have shut down oyster farms like mine for long periods, with devastating economic and environmental consequences. I don't believe HBRC has always been tough enough, especially in holding councils and major organisations accountable. At the same time, I want to see Hawke's Bay thrive economically. Strong enforcement

and economic growth go hand in hand, protecting our environment is essential for sustainable industries, jobs, and long-term prosperity.

Tony Kuklinski: It's in all ratepayers' interests that the councils work together. If the Regional Council finishes up taking a district council to the Environment Court, then it's the lawyers that win. Ratepayers on both sides lose. I'm not aware of the HRBC not being tough enough and I assume the CHBDC would feel that they've been very tough in regard to waste water in the past.

Keri Ropiha: I love this for the first question. Council core business is one of my 3 drivers to run for HBRC. I believe HBRC lacks the authority to manage compliance issues, offenders or enforcement. The current process is not fit for purpose, devoid of the ability and autonomy for HBRC to monitor, regulate, or impose penalties for environmental protection breaches. Breach levels and penalties are set by central government not HBRC ensuring low-level accountability equating to no community benefit. I see huge opportunity to flip this fail to a financial and strategic growth area, generating a new revenue stream to empower council and achieve regional environmental protection requirements. Right now, they can't.

Wairoa constituency

Kiri Rangirangi-Hamlin: It is my opinion, and has been bourn out by my own personal and professional experiences, that HBRC is a veritable toothless giant, lacking the power to enforce environmental regulations effectively, no pressure to create outcomes that will make a difference 'te mauri heke mai o te taio' (the future environment). Businesses may continue water takes whilst renewal is on hold, discharge when they are sectioned, 'environmental' planning goes ahead without adequate consultation with all parties of interest or collaborative approach between councils for land usage change. Those are my own 'work stories' attempting to lobby from outside Council, so I want to weigh in, at the table, to make change that will see greater strategic thinking further into the future, to advocate te mana o te Wai, te mana o te whenua.

Di Roadley: HBRC has a clear mandate: to protect and enhance our region's natural resources for current and future generations. That includes enforcing environmental protections—even when it means challenging actions or omissions by other councils or businesses. This is a core function of HBRC under the Resource Management Act and other regulatory frameworks, and it must be carried out with integrity and consistency.

But enforcement alone isn't enough. HBRC must also balance environmental protection with economic development and social wellbeing. That means being firm where needed, but also agile—able to pivot when circumstances change, new evidence emerges, or community needs evolve.

Being "tough enough" isn't about being inflexible. It's about being principled, transparent, and responsive. HBRC should hold itself and others to account while also fostering collaboration, innovation, and practical solutions that work for our region.

Ngaruroro constituency

Jerf Van Beek: Exceptions exist, but I believe shared education is key in compliance. Starting with harsh measures rarely benefits relationships or outcomes. Still, I have little tolerance for malice or repeated offenses.

Marcus Ormond: Yes (often the fines are very low due to legislation).

Māui ki te Raki Māori Regional Constituency

Michelle McIlroy: In Wairoa I have experienced firsthand HBRC prosecution of AFFCO NZ Ltd for an illegal discharge resulting in a \$138,000 fine. As tangata whenua, a team of us produced the Cultural Impact Assessment which carried weight in the decision under Te Mana o Te Wai. Enforcement, however, is only as strong as national policy allows – and upcoming changes to the RMA will weaken those protections. There is always room for improvement and communities must keep pushing for stronger standards and resources to ensure compliance. If there are no rules – or if the rules are gutted – then our taiao and our hāpori will be the ones who pay the price. Ka ora te taiao, ka ora te tangata!

Shelton White: Debatable- some would argue that response was almost irresponsible and slow to respond in most cases. In the interests of public safety important decisions have to be made quickly to reduce risk and damage. There will always be an element of controversy and rhetoric.

Māui ki te Tonga Māori Regional Constituency

Thompson Hokianga: No I don't think enough tough enforcement on environmental protections. Tougher Enforcement could look like:

- Hold councils and businesses accountable for breaches, no more quiet deals or delayed action.
- Enforce water allocation limits and penalise overuse, especially in stressed catchments.
- Protect wetlands, floodplains, and riparian zones from degradation and development.
- Require cultural impact assessments for high-risk activities, not just technical ones.
- Resource mana whenua to monitor and report environmental breaches, true partnership means shared authority.

Current estimates put the cost of all feasible flood control options for the region at around \$600 million. How do you believe HBRC should approach this huge challenge ... how much is 'safe enough'?

Hastings/HN constituency

Conrad Waitoa: In higher-risk areas, protection may need to increase to one in five-hundred-year standards. Cyclone Gabrielle proved that existing flood protection is not enough. What is 'safe enough' must be based on risk, climate modelling, and community voice. HBRC's approach must blend engineering, Mātauranga Māori, and local knowledge. Land use and catchment management are just as important. We must invest wisely now to protect people and whenua long term. I stand for your local vote to bring both urgency and balance to this work.

Bruce Mackay: HBRC has a responsibility to maintain their assets which include flood control assets like stopbanks and pumping stations. The question is how to understand the urgency, prioritise the spend, and what level of risk is acceptable. The dollar value becomes a further consideration.

Sophie Siers: The community / rate payer must ultimately decide the level of flood protection it wants and the amount it wants to pay for it. With current climatic conditions, there is no simple number that means "safe." I think what really matters is how community are involved. The Reimagining Flood Resilience process is designed to bring a wide range of voices and experiences into the conversation, so recommendations to Council reflect not just engineering solutions, but also community values and priorities. I think it's a good approach.

Jock Mackintosh: We all want to be “protected” from floods but protected is a relative term. There is no such thing as absolute protection. There are two components to the answer – one is to take the community along with us so they can have input into flood mitigation options and understand the costs of that. This is a major communications exercise and that work is underway. The second component and arguably the hardest, is to make decisions taking into account community feedback, expert advice and costs. A gold-plated solution is too costly and inevitably there will be people who feel that they are not getting enough protection, but that is a reality of living in Hawke’s Bay. We have a great climate but with that comes extremes including floods and droughts.

Napier constituency

Neil Kirton: The cost of adequate flood protection is likely to exceed \$1billion. We must increase flood protection to repel a minimum 1 in 200-year weather events. HBRC is considering a range of options including changes to stop banks, nature-based solutions, increased maintenance, adding spillways and flood paths to divert flood water.

Paul Bailey: By going out to the community to explore their views prior to putting any decisions out for consultation in the next LTP round HBRC appears to be taking the right approach in exploring all feasible flood control options for the region. They did this with the Coastal Hazards Committees, which to my mind worked well.

The question is who are they consulting with, how were they selected, and is sufficient time being given to disseminate all the information necessary to develop genuine community lead options? Risk assessment is paramount so that it can be weighed up against costs. I liken it to car insurance. Do the public want third-party only or will they want full replacement? Either way any decision I would make around the future of our stopbanks would be influenced by what the community wants.

Personally I’m a fan of the notion of ‘letting the rivers breathe’ however I’m conscious that this comes at a substantially higher cost than other potential options. It is also vital that the wider community comes to an understanding as to why our stopbanks failed, what lessons have been learned, and what changes need to be made to management of our stopbanks in the future.

Hinewai Ormsby: We’ve seen the cost of doing too little. “Safe enough” means families protected, communities connected, and food production sustained during extreme weather. Cyclone Gabrielle was our wake-up call to the largest flood on record in New Zealand. I led our regional council through that crisis and recovery – and I know firsthand that resilience isn’t cheap, but neither is rebuilding. We need to invest smartly: prioritise critical stopbanks, spillways, secondary flow areas, restore wetlands, and rethink how and where we build. We must seek government co-investment, leverage every dollar, and keep fairness at the centre. It’s not just infrastructure – it’s peace of mind.

Hayley Browne: We need to have much deeper conversations with the community. One-off consultations rarely get people past the headlines. Citizen assemblies, focus groups, and key stakeholder meetings are where we can build agreement on what is required before any design work begins. It may feel slower at first, but it prevents polarising politics later. Ultimately, “safe enough” must be defined with the community, because what level of risk is acceptable is a collective decision, not just a technical one.

Syed Khurram Icbal: Prioritise prevention now. "Safe enough" demands immediate wetland restoration and stopbank upgrades via public-private partnerships—funded by central co-investment and reallocating HBRC’s \$15M/year disaster budget. Delaying to 2030 risks \$500M+ in damage.

Louise Parsons: HBRC shouldn't be allowed to throw money at the problem just to cover for their poor decisions. Safety isn't about big spending; it's about sound judgment. Our region was measured by an "intolerable risk to life" matrix, yet this was based on blanket flood mapping. Some Category 3 properties never even flooded, yet these homes were bought with our money and then demolished. A catastrophic outcome for all, due to poor decision making.

The elephant in the room? This wasn't a flash flood. We had time to evacuate; the true intolerable risk to life was HBRC's failure to warn its residents.

One option, called 2P, would've allowed people to stay and build up, like using poles or raised platforms. But a *staff member* from HBRC said outright, "We don't like 2P." Is that what's guiding safety decisions? Personal preference? These are the same people now making the calls on how \$600 million gets spent. That's not acceptable.

CHB constituency

Tim Aitken: This is a massive challenge, and we must be realistic while ambitious. "Safe enough" means protecting lives first, then livelihoods. We need a staged, science-driven approach that prioritises the most significant risk areas. We can't afford to do nothing, but we also can't overpromise. The solutions must balance immediate needs with long-term resilience so communities, farms, and businesses can continue to grow with confidence.

Tony Kuklinski: It's not reasonable nor practical to double our rates from now to pay for necessary flood protection. There is a need to balance cost with flood protection. Our Regional Council has had some success to date receiving central government funding for this work. For example, in Central Hawke's Bay, 75% of the \$13 million dollar cost of the Porangahau stop bank comes from central government while the remainder (25% funding) comes from HBRC. This is part of the \$242 million received from the central government's North Island Weather Event Fund (NIWF).

We need to remember that no flood protection system can eliminate all flood risk.

Keri Ropiha: Overseas research, modelling and flood control options are well-tested, proven and environmentally sustainable as a result of global flooding disasters. In May 2022, 3 months after Cyclone Gabrielle devastated our region and my hometown of Pōrangahau, I was in Oslo, Norway to present at an international conference. I spent the next week road tripping, hosted by my Norwegian sister-friend: Oslo to Asker, Klokke, Saetre and last two days in Skein at her home. The trip was to show me sites of new innovation, design ingenuity, and bespoke solutions for at risk communities for flood mitigation and protection. Investing in open national engagement was a catalyst to prioritising protection and people before budget, based on beneficial outcomes, not affordable or lowest cost. It's impressive, diverse, site-specific, and a game changer. We need to copy their success.

Wairoa constituency

Kiri Rangirangi-Hamlin: I am an advocate for the 'Making room for rivers' philosophy taught by Tom Kay of Forest and Bird. This philosophy would be 'safe enough' and teaches an aspirational and balanced approach to allowing the natural rhythm of a river in 'tension' with human need for productive land, homes with flat low lying lands or fabulous near water views and the need for protection against inundation for those homes. \$600M seems a bit light, no one has explained how the 'feasible' options were separated from aspirational options and how the rivers are the losers that pay the price.

Di Roadley: The “safe enough” question is a good one—and it can only be answered by those who are directly at risk. Just as we’re seeing in the work around evacuation trigger levels, every individual has a different tolerance for risk, a unique risk profile, and varying levels of preparedness.

Flood management options must be shaped by the communities who live in those places. But this must be balanced with affordability and the critical “who pays” question, which needs to be addressed alongside the “what to do” conversation. This isn’t a decision for Council alone.

Council’s role is to provide a robust and equitable framework for these conversations to take place. Ultimately, it will be required to act—but that action should reflect both the community’s wishes and the logistical realities. We must also acknowledge that no solution will satisfy everyone.

Ngaruroro constituency

Jerf Van Beek: Cyclone Gabrielle devastated our house, business, and orchards. Having grown up in a flood-prone area, we learned to live with such events.

In Hawke’s Bay, we lacked a plan B—our stopbanks weren’t designed or maintained for extreme events. We should prioritise restoring river channels and bridges to their intended flow capacity, determine which stopbanks can and should feasibly be raised, and allow rivers more room. Overland flows must also be included in our future flood resilience strategies and managed to minimise damage. Investment decisions should clearly weigh life and infrastructure, with transparent costs and the final say resting with ratepayers. We must strip back to our essential responsibilities—nothing more, nothing less—if we are to afford a truly safe future. Only through unwavering discipline and clear priorities can we deliver what the region needs most.

Marcus Ormond: Whilst \$600 million pales in comparison to the estimated \$5billion dollars worth of damage caused by cyclone Gabrielle in HB, that amount of spending would double HBRC rates. The Hawke’s Bay Independent Flood Review, published in July 2024 provides an excellent basis for what to prioritise spending on.

Māui ki te Raki Māori Regional Constituency

Michelle Mclroy: Cyclone Gabrielle exposed both the risks and the gaps. The Māui ki Te Raki constituency is living proof of this – the catastrophe affected not only lives but livelihoods. Flood control requires strong central government support, so this isn’t just a regional issue.

Shelton White: Prioritise areas of significance, stabilise and or improve their resilience and find permanent solutions and limit repeated re works. How much is safe enough? I really don’t know, however it’s difficult to gauge the strength and damage the next event may cause. But we need to do as much as we can to prevent or reduce the risk factors in our region.

Māui ki te Tonga Māori Regional Constituency

Thompson Hokianga: HBRC must approach this challenge with bold pragmatism and cultural integrity. Cyclone Gabrielle exposed the vulnerability of our communities, especially marae and papakāinga. The \$600 million estimate reflects the scale of what’s needed to protect lives, whenua, and whakapapa.

‘Safe enough’ must be defined not just by engineering standards, but by community resilience:

- Prioritize high-risk areas where Marae and Māori communities are concentrated.

- Co-design solutions with mana whenua to ensure flood protection respects tikanga and taiao.
- Adopt a “low-regret” strategy invest in infrastructure that delivers both flood resilience and environmental co-benefits (e.g., wetlands, riparian planting).
- Use climate-adjusted standards like the 1-in-500-year design benchmark already applied to some stopbanks.

This isn't just about infrastructure it's about intergenerational safety. HBRC must ask: Are we protecting whakapapa or just assets?

To help reduce the ratepayer cost of such a major potential scale of flood protection, do you believe HBRC should consider selling down its shares in Napier Port in order to invest instead in better earning financial assets?

Hastings/HN constituency

Conrad Waitoa: Would central government sell its shares in Kiwi bank or Transpower for short-term gain? Napier Port is more than a financial asset. It is a strategic regional gateway that delivers stable dividends and supports environmental funding. Any decision to sell must involve robust modelling, community consultation, and clarity about what would be gained or lost. I stand for your local vote to ensure long-term value is protected with evidence, not assumption.

Bruce Mackay: I believe that HBRC should focus on its core responsibilities like environmental protection, flood protection, asset protection and so on, and should not be in the business in investing in other businesses unless they contribute to those core functions.

Sophie Siers: The HBRIC portfolio exists to benefit the region, and it should be regularly tested to ensure it's delivering the best return to ratepayers. The HBRIC board now has professional and independent directors who are consistently evaluating both financial returns and wider strategic benefits. This isn't a static question, it evolves in tandem with our increased understanding of the costs of river management and flood resilience. As a governor, the role is to remain open to all options and recommendations presented by the HBRIC board, and try to find the balance between long-term intergenerational value and present-day needs.

Jock Mackintosh: Ultimately the ratepayers will decide. Personally I am reluctant to sell down assets. Our assets are the light at the end of the tunnel as far as rate rises are concerned. Currently our income from assets equals about one third of our rates bill. In other words they subsidise our rates a lot. The good news is we can do even better.

Napier constituency

Neil Kirton: It is inevitable that ratepayers will have to stump up to ensure a 1 in 200-year level of flood protection. Already we are spending \$260 million on cyclone recovery. HBRC is turning over every stone to find ways of funding this essential work, so it is affordable for ratepayers.

Any sale of the council's investment in the port must be consulted on as it is a strategic asset. The public will have their say over public ownership, weighing up the benefit of shifting investment into critical flood protection infrastructure.

Paul Bailey: I don't think the timing is right to consider a sell down of Napier Port shares. As I write this they are still valued less than what they were listed for so HBRIC would be locking in a loss.

The term 'better earning financial assets' is moot. What do we consider to be 'better earning'. If we consider this question simply in terms of dollar returns both HBRC and HBRIC have sufficient liquid investments already to diversify their portfolios if they desire. If we consider the question in terms of social return, maintaining as much interest in the region's most valuable strategic asset, Napier Port, is imperative.

Hinewai Ormsby: Napier Port has been a strategic asset for the Council — it anchors our economy, our exports, and our regional identity. We must find smarter ways to fund resilience — including long-term infrastructure funding tools, co-investment from central government, and better financial assets that don't compromise our future. Considering all options in the future will be one ultimately influenced by the regional appetite and a very strong case for change.

Hayley Browne: It is about balance. Having a diversified investment portfolio is important for the stability of the income coming back to HBRC, which helps keep rates low. In a disaster like a major earthquake, it would be catastrophic if, at the same time as our region was hard hit, our investments were too. At the same time, I know there is strong public sentiment about keeping the port in local ownership to protect local interests. It would depend on how much was suggested to be sold and whether that would risk losing our controlling interest.

Syed Khurram Icbal: Oppose sales. Port dividends fund regional resilience. Leverage Crown Infrastructure Partnerships and climate grants instead—mirroring my capital works delivery at local government sector without asset sales.

Louise Parsons: Absolutely not. That would be throwing away a generational asset to fund bad decisions. For example, there's \$14 million about to be wasted building a stop bank proposed in my own community, but the unconsented hardfill mountain next door remains and is still growing, which will negate any effort made. Can we honestly trust this Council to manage or invest major funds responsibly? No way. Napier Port generates value for our region. Selling it would be like selling the farm to fix the fence.

CHB constituency

Tim Aitken: I'm not in favour of selling strategic assets without clear evidence it will benefit the region long term. Napier Port is central to Hawke's Bay's economy and a key driver of growth. Before any decision is made, we need transparency about what level of dividends the Port is expected to deliver and what other financial assets HBRC would realistically invest in. Until then, I believe holding onto Napier Port shares is the safer option for both financial stability and economic growth.

Tony Kuklinski: Our Regional Council owns 55% of the Napier Port, i.e. around 280 million of the total port value of a little over 500 million. The port makes up approximately 80% of the value of investments in the council's investment company. So yes, there is significant concentration risk. For example: If Hawke's Bay suffered another major earthquake where land, homes and the port were majorly damaged, HBRC rate payers would be on the receiving end of a double whammy because the Regional Council needs the income from the port to keep rates down. So, yes there is a strong argument to sell down the port and invest in better returning financial assets.

I would also support the Regional Council looking at some other ideas to create new income streams. Like doing a feasibility study into creating a business out of extracting and selling shingle from CHB river systems.

Keri Ropiha: No. I've served on a regional investment board and understand the complexities of positioning and advancing investment strategies, particularly in challenging global climates vs the quick-fix panic of immediate sell-down for short-term gain. Embedding financial growth options of sustainability will ensure long-term investment outcomes are achieved for intergenerational benefits.

Wairoa constituency

Kiri Rangirangi-Hamlin: : As a Gen X I have witnessed multiple cycles of overspending, asset selling, recuperating and cost cutting NZ central and local governments. So that is a Strong 'No!' to selling 'concrete' Napier Port shares for investment in 'better earning, fly-by-night fad' assets.

Di Roadley: HBRC must explore all avenues to reduce the financial burden on ratepayers, especially when facing major infrastructure challenges like flood protection. That includes reviewing the performance of all regional assets—including Napier Port shares—and considering whether alternative investments could deliver better long-term returns.

Investment is a specialist skill, and Council has an opportunity to build a robust framework that attracts the brightest minds and best ideas. Any decision must be made with care, transparency, and a clear understanding of risk and reward.

We have an obligation to act not just for today, but for our mokopuna—for future generations. That means seeking enduring outcomes, not short-term fixes. HBRC must act on behalf of the whole region when managing its financial assets, ensuring decisions reflect long-term resilience, regional equity, and sustainable prosperity.

Selling down Port shares should not be off the table—but it must be part of a wider, well-informed strategy.

Ngaruroro constituency

Jerf Van Beek: We just have had a very rainy day! The idea of selling Napier Port is new, and while it may make investment sense, the port is vital to our export sector. All options should be carefully considered, though I do not support doing nothing.

Marcus Ormond: Yes.

Māui ki te Raki Māori Regional Constituency

Michelle McIlroy: Napier Port shares, held by HBRIC (Hawke's Bay Regional Investment Company), were intended to generate long-term returns so ratepayers don't carry the full burden. From what I have seen, those returns are now steady and providing income that helps fund council kaupapa. Any proposal to sell them down needs very careful due diligence – especially when climate resilience is our number one priority. We shouldn't plug a short-term gap by selling a long-term asset unless the benefits are crystal clear. "Mō tātou, ā, mō kā uri ā muri ake nei"

Shelton White: An option worth considering but requires a sound business approach, Personally I feel we have inherent cost associated with the port of Napier and regardless we still face an increase cost on the ratepayer but this can be reduced by improved commercial outcomes. The latest 16% rise in container volumes has given confidence to the export sector. Pan Pac rising to full production, a good growing season in the horticulture sector gives the region a much-needed boost.

Questions I need to ask?

- (1) The sell down of shares,
- (2) Sourcing other investment opportunities,
- (3) What impact will this have overall if any,
- (4) How will it affect the ratepayer,

So, in short, my answer would be (NO) our region depends on our export industry which is vital to the future of our community.

Māui ki te Tonga Māori Regional Constituency

Thompson Hokianga: This is a strategic pivot worth serious consideration. Napier Port currently represents 80% of HBRC's investment portfolio and returns less than other financial assets. While the Port is a taonga to many, its dominance creates concentration risk and limits HBRC's ability to fund critical infrastructure like flood protection.

Key considerations:

- Diversification is prudent: Selling down a portion could unlock capital for higher-yield investments.
- Ring-fence proceeds for taiao resilience: Ensure any sale directly funds flood protection, climate adaptation, and community safety.
- Engage the public transparently: Many view the Port as a "crown jewel" consultation must honour that sentiment while explaining the financial realities.

If we want to protect our people, we must be willing to rethink our portfolio.

HBRC has committed about \$3 million to investigating the feasibility of a storage dam on a tributary of the Ngaruroro River. At the same time, an effort is underway to revive construction of a 'new' Ruataniwha Dam in CHB. Do you support either initiative? Would you support HBRC Council putting ratepayer funds into the construction or future operation of either dam?

Hastings/HN constituency

Conrad Waitoa: I understand HBRC's feasibility assessment for Heretaunga storage is already underway and scheduled through to 2026. It must be transparent, culturally safe, and governed with care. Community trust and mana whenua partnership are critical. The Ruataniwha proposal was halted due to concerns over its legality, environmental impact, and cultural significance. Future water storage must meet cultural, ecological, and economic standards. I stand for your local vote to ensure water decisions are made with integrity and care for future generations.

Bruce Mackay: I support both initiatives and support HBRC engagement in the feasibility and development of both projects as they have a fundamental responsibility in creating the regulatory environment that will allow either or both schemes to exist. I do not consider they should put ratepayer funds into the construction of either dam, but do believe they should have some sort of involvement in the operation of either dam fundamentally to monitor and manage environmental impacts.

Sophie Siers: All water storage options should be fully investigated and evaluated. My strongly held belief is that projects of this nature must be backed by strong business cases which stand up as commercially viable in their own right. I do not support ratepayer money being relied upon to make any business case viable.

Jock Mackintosh: A note of clarity here because people are confused about the two dam projects. One is a 27m cubic metre dam on a tributary to the Ngaruroro river. This is to augment river flow in summer and to underwrite existing commercial and urban water use on the Heretaunga plains. The other – Tukituki water storage (old Ruataniwha) is a 100m cubic metre dam that potentially provides new irrigation water to central Hawke’s Bay and also augments Tukituki river flow in summer.

I am a strong advocate of the storage dam on the tributary of the Ngaruroro river. We know there are water shortages looming and they could be catastrophic for Hawke’s Bay, both environmentally and economically. If we know that, we are irresponsible if we don’t do something. But there are caveats. First we need to be sure that the project stacks up. Dams are complicated to build and they need to be commercially and environmentally viable. Intensive feasibility work is being done now to address these things. We expect to know that outcome of that work in the first half of 2026. The second caveat is “ownership” of the project. HBRC recently transferred this to those who benefit most from water storage. That is Hastings and Napier Councils, mana whenua and commercial users. This is a good structure. These are the main groups to benefit from water security and they will also be the main funders of the project.

Regarding HBRC ratepayer investment – I see this as being a small amount, if any. The majority of the funding needs to come from the users, as indicated above.

For Tukituki water storage, HBRC invested \$20m in the original project and much of that expenditure is relevant to the current project. We haven’t seen the financial model for the scheme but it’s hard to see more being invested by HBRC. Again, it needs to be driven and funded by the beneficiaries of the project. I do support their efforts though. This is a major undertaking and one that can be a game changer in Central Hawke’s Bay.

Napier constituency

Neil Kirton: Water security is a monumental problem for Hawke’s Bay. By 2040 the Heretaunga plains will need an additional 33 million cubic meters of water. The region’s economy, our environment and the more than 100,000 people living on the Heretaunga plains must have access to more water.

Exploring options and developing the business case for water storage can be justifiable public expenditure, only if there is clearly demonstrated public good, benefiting most ratepayers. But water users must fund and run any such water storage project.

Ratepayers learned a very expensive \$20 million lesson from the previous Ruataniwha Dam fiasco. It is derisory to spend more public money pursuing this project for the benefit of a very few. The cost to build it would exceed \$1 billion, making it the most expensive water in the world. The latest Ruataniwha dam revival has got nothing to do with building a dam. The project has zero chance of proceeding beyond consultants and hangers-on feasting on \$6 million of public largesse.

Paul Bailey: Water security remains one of the critical issues facing Hawke's Bay. The 2023 Regional Water Assessment (RWA) report is often quoted to drive change in behavior and to support the building of further water storage dams. The RWA has a number of shortcomings including not

breaking down future water shortages into catchments. It lumps Hawke's Bay together whereas the challenges for CHB are different than those in Heretaunga and Waioira.

CHB has a land use challenge with approximately 45% used by a handful of dairy farms. Not only has this led to water availability inequities it has also led to an increase in nitrogen levels in the Ruataniwha aquifer. I would advocate for a review of these water consents with a view to reallocating this water to more sustainable uses.

This is why I remain opposed to Ruataniwha dam V2. It is unnecessary. I also would not support any proposal to pour any more ratepayers money into the scheme.

Whilst I support the Whanawhana dam in principle it should not come at any further expense to the ratepayers than that which has already been committed. We also need to come to the awareness that it is only a stop-gap measure and it has to be considered in conjunction with efficiency gains.

Hinewai Ormsby: I support feasibility studies — as long as they're transparent and robust. We must understand the science, the cost, and the environmental and cultural impact before moving forward. But I do not support using ratepayer money to construct large-scale dams — particularly when the ecological damage may outweigh the benefits. I have stood strong on no further rate payer dollar to the furthering of the Ruataniwha Dam particularly with the difficult access needed of the protected conservation area. Our region needs water resilience, but it must be nature-based, community-supported, and future-fit.

Hayley Browne: We should learn from the last Ruataniwha project. It makes sense for HBRC to do the initial feasibility work, but no, especially as the regulator, there should be no HBRC ratepayer funds put into the construction or operation of a dam.

Syed Khurram Icbal: Neither. HBRC's \$3M feasibility spend ignores 25% water loss from leaky pipes. Invest in Managed Aquifer Recharge and pipe repairs using \$1.2M/year saved from consultant cuts.

Louise Parsons: Sadly, politics killed the Ruataniwha Dam and with it, the prosperity it could've delivered for Central Hawke's Bay. When people around the table come with agendas instead of solutions, everyone loses.

I support both dams being fully explored and developed. It's time the Council made decisions that benefit *all* people, the economy and the environment equally. Right now, that balance is way off.

Spending \$3 million to ensure the Ngaruroro dam is feasible is not excessive. Imagine the cost if construction began and had to stop halfway through due to poor planning. That's real waste.

CHB constituency

Tim Aitken: I support investigating and, where practical, delivering water storage. Fresh water is one of New Zealand's greatest assets; it underpins food production, climate resilience, and economic growth. Climate change already brings more droughts, and storage gives us the tools to manage them. Any project, including the Ruataniwha Dam, must meet strong environmental standards and gain community backing, but we cannot afford to turn away from opportunities that safeguard water for future generations. I would support Council funding where the benefits outweigh the costs.

Tony Kuklinski: I look forward to reading the feasibility and business case in 18 months time for the new Ruataniwha Dam in Central Hawke's Bay.

I support the need for water storage in a summer dry region like Hawke's Bay and both dams will need a user pays model to be successful. I don't believe the Regional Council will be the future operator of either dam.

Many rate payers have made it clear that they do not want rate payers' money spent on the construction of dam projects. We also need to remember that water is over allocated in Heretaunga and CHB/Tamatea, and water applied to highly producing horticultural crops on our fertile soils is good for our economy and is good for the environment.

Keri Ropiha: No, I do not support ratepayer funding for dam construction or operational costs.

I am a member of the Tamatea Pokai Whenua Mana Whenua Working Party for the Tukituki Water Security Project. We will continue mahi in the next stage of the feasibility study to assist an iwi-wide position on water. I am deeply concerned at the disregard of the \$25m burnt in the first-round failure for no outcomes, public community outrage is still a platform, and we are starting over with \$6m of new money. I am also concerned we will expire resources in my lifetime, a legacy I do not want to leave for my moko, or his moko. We need to be smarter, focus on intergenerational, and exhaust all viable options to challenge a dam only option. Te Mana o Te Wai is purported as the basis for enabling a change in the function and delivery model to provide community-wide benefit across our rohe. TMOTW values prioritise the health of the water first, people health second, everything else last.

I am keen to see how the dam can meet, sustain or improve the current degraded mauri of the river with a project that defies the very essence of cultural values, tikanga, and respecting environmental preservation and protection. You cannot destroy natural spaces for human resources in a meaningful way. I want to know who will be advising and presenting the TMOTW and Te Ao Maori lens to support the proposed strategy and confirm cultural integrity and values are met.

Wairoa constituency

Kiri Rangirangi-Hamlin: Awesome song by John Hanlon comes to mind.... 'Damn the Dam'. While indigenous nations in the northern hemisphere celebrate demolishing dams and returning ecology to lands and waterways not seen in generations, we in our wisdom, are contemplating condemning our waterways to 'dam-nation', further, commodifying our water by abdicating that to corporate interest.

Di Roadley: Over the past three years, I've been part of a Council committed to shifting HBRC's role from being the "doer" to becoming the "enabler." Through our Effectiveness and Efficiency Review, we are tooling-up to reduce pressure on rates and reshape how the Regional Council delivers services—empowering communities to act, take responsibility, and build self-reliance.

When it comes to large-scale water infrastructure like the proposed Whanawhana and Ruataniwha dams, I believe HBRC's role is to support robust investigation and enable good decisions—not to fund construction or operation. The principle of fairness must apply: those who benefit should pay, and those who benefit most—particularly in business growth models—should contribute the most. Homeowners should not be expected to subsidise business essentials, though we must also consider the wider benefits to regional prosperity and environmental gains.

The current private-led model for the 'new' Ruataniwha Dam is a good example of how historical community support can enable future growth. Likewise, the feasibility work underway at Whanawhana is a vital part of Hawke's Bay's broader water strategy. It sits alongside other important initiatives like water savings, nature-based solutions, aquifer recharge, and resource management under the TANK framework.

Exploring these opportunities is in the best interest of the whole region. We must understand the complexities, support innovation, and enable long-term resilience—without placing unfair burdens on ratepayers.

Ngaruroro constituency

Jerf Van Beek: To begin, I do not support allocating HBRC council ratepayer funds toward the construction or future operation of either dam. The guiding principle moving forward should be "User Pays and Governs." It is well recognised that climate change will bring both wetter and drier conditions. Hawke's Bay's favourable climate and rich soils are fundamental to our primary industries, which would not thrive without reliable water sources; thus, I am in favour of water storage.

However, I acknowledge there are numerous ways to optimise available water through technological advancements, global water-sharing initiatives, re-use systems, and other innovative approaches. My support for the feasibility study of the Whanawhana water storage project was based on the understanding that achieving environmental water release is a lengthy process. In this time, alternative solutions may arise that are preferable to committing to a facility that could become a burden on our primary industries. It is important to note that there are multiple decision points throughout the water storage planning process, providing flexibility as we move forward.

Marcus Ormond: Investing in water storage for the Ruataniwha plains before the Heretaunga plains doesn't make sense to me. Ensuring adequate water supply for Napier, Hastings and the horticulture surrounding is a priority and I would support ratepayer funds being spent on the construction and operation of such a dam. Water storage on a tributary of the Ngaruroro won't require expensive pipes for distribution as over half of the main aquifer's supply is via the Ngaruroro riverbed. Stored water could be released into the river and accessed using the existing infrastructure."

Māui ki te Raki Māori Regional Constituency

Michelle McIlroy: Given the \$600 million already needed for flood control, we need to ask what voters believe is the real priority – safety, warning systems and flood protection, or more money into water storage when the rain barely stops these days. Who truly benefits, and who pays? Any decision must focus on community safety and long-term environmental sustainability.

Shelton White: No- Too much controversy.

Māui ki te Tonga Māori Regional Constituency

Thompson Hokianga: I do **not support further public investment** in the revived Ruataniwha Dam. Ratepayers have already paid enough. If private interests wish to pursue it, they should fund it themselves. We must be cautious of well-rehearsed tactics that manufacture urban water crises to justify large-scale infrastructure. These schemes often sideline community voices and ignore smarter, more sustainable alternatives.

Instead of pouring millions into concrete, let's invest in **practical, proven solutions**:

- Fix the leaks up to 40% of potable water is lost in council networks.
- Introduce water meters and volumetric charging to reduce consumption.
- Require water tanks for new builds to manage peak demand and stormwater.
- Subsidise residential water tanks to build household resilience.

Beyond urban fixes, I support **nature-based solutions** that restore our taiao and uphold our values:

- Recharge aquifers through wetland restoration.
- Improve land use and catchment health halt gravel extraction, plant riparian zones, and reestablish wetlands.
- Reduce water allocations to protect river ecosystems.

Any proposal for water storage must answer hard questions:

- What's the cost-benefit comparison between dams and distributed, nature-based solutions?
- How reliable is surface storage in a future of unpredictable rainfall?
- Will the dam worsen ecological stress during droughts if used for irrigation?

Let's choose solutions that honour our whenua, protect our wai, and empower our communities not ones that repeat the mistakes of the past

Do you believe HBRC is doing enough to develop potential *reductions* in the region's water demand? What possibilities of this sort do you see?

Hastings/HN constituency

Conrad Waitoa: There is growing urgency. The Regional Water Assessment shows demand may exceed supply by more than twenty per cent in the coming decades. Smarter irrigation, leak detection, water metering, greywater reuse, and community education must all play a role. Storage alone cannot solve our water issues. I stand for your local vote to support solutions that value water as a taonga and ensure fair use across the region.

Bruce Mackay: I consider this question should be framed as working to reduce water use. I see water demand increasing due to population growth, climate related changes, land use changes, whatever. I know HBRC are working on initiatives to reduce water use, fixing leaks, irrigator awareness, compliance with consent conditions. I believe that there are increasing demands on available water and that HB's best opportunity will come from increasing water supply and flexibility in how it may be used.

Sophie Siers: I believe we are doing only just enough and it's not happening fast enough for my liking. But the obvious steps are now in place and are being fast tracked; better municipal water management through leak reduction, more careful residential use, aquifer recharge, commercial and industrial reuse, and making sure that best-practice standards in horticulture and agriculture become the minimum standard, not the aspirational one. The implementation of these options is now a priority.

Jock Mackintosh: No we are not. Several of us Councillors have been advocating hard for this and we are now getting traction. Solutions need to involve supply and demand, and there a number of options. We can do much better with water recycling, especially industrial water, more efficient irrigation, more efficient urban water use and so on. Shortly we will have a paper which outlines all the options with a view to prioritising those to get best bang for buck.

Napier constituency

Neil Kirton: The regional council recognizes the absolute requirement to include a host of water use restraints as part of an overall water security strategy. It is inevitable that metering is introduced for urban water users.

Water recycling must play a part. I have advocated a “purple pipe strategy” used in Californian jurisdictions. This involves running pipes (purple in colour), back to households, recycling storm water, for use in the garden or washing the car.

Much more efficient irrigation systems must be introduced if our growers are to maintain production. A revolution is needed in the pastoral sector, focusing on regenerative farming practices.

Paul Bailey: Water users in Heretaunga have recognised that there is a limit to available water. It brings an end to the notion of unlimited growth. To my mind this is a huge step forward. So the challenge here is to either increase supply – hence the proposed Whanawhana dam, or encourage water use efficiencies – and this is where the notion of actual and reasonable use is going to be a game changer, or do both.

We are all in this together hence my support for urban water metering (although we need to be careful about fairness of allocation). I would advocate for HBRC to actively promote efficient water use in agriculture, horticulture, industry, and in our urban settings. Our attitude towards water needs to change from it being a right to it being a privilege because we don't abuse privileges.

Hinewai Ormsby: We are starting to move in the right direction — but much more is needed. Water is precious, and our future depends on how wisely we use it. I support universal water metering, especially in urban areas with metering of new builds a ‘no brainer’. I support stronger compliance, demand management, and land-use rules that protect aquifers. We should also invest more in education, storage (where appropriate), and supporting landowners who shift to regenerative, water-efficient systems. Community, mana whenua, and industry all need to be part of the solution. Water connects us all.

Hayley Browne: There's more we can do. On the rural side, the new TANK rules and Freshwater Farm Plans will lift efficiency. In our cities, Napier has already signaled it will introduce water meters, and Hastings has trialled them. In other regions, meters have reduced demand by around 25 percent, leading to quicker leak detection, less need for costly new infrastructure, and ultimately more affordable water at the tap. Looking ahead, all water users will need to recognise that demand management is an essential part of caring for such a valuable resource.

Syed Khurram Icbal: Inadequate. Enforce land-use caps in nitrate zones; deploy leak detection; scale stormwater capture for aquifer recharge.

Louise Parsons: HBRC has made solid progress in supporting smarter water use in farming and horticulture, which is vital for our region. Initiatives that promote efficiency and innovation in land-based industries are encouraging to see.

But when it comes to overall water demand, I believe more can still be done, especially at the residential level. Reducing water use shouldn't just fall on businesses or growers. We all have a role to play.

If you've ever stayed somewhere solely relying on rainwater tanks, what happens to your behaviour? Not a drop is wasted, because once it's gone, you either wait for rain or pay to refill it. That experience changes behaviours and how you think about water. It's the kind of mindset we need to encourage more widely.

I would support water meters, but only if it's an even playing field. No special deals, no hidden subsidies, just a fair system where those who waste water carry the cost, not responsible users. Behavioural change is important, but so is accountability and equity.

CHB constituency

Tim Aitken: No, I don't believe they are doing enough. Managing water demand isn't just the responsibility of landowners, everyone in the region has to adapt. We should be focused on creating better returns for every litre of water used, through smarter irrigation, modern infrastructure, and efficiency across the board. I support making more water available if it helps create wealth and promotes sustainable growth, as long as it's used wisely and productively.

Tony Kuklinski: In a summer dry region like Hawke's Bay it is natural that HBRC would look to encourage potential reductions in the region's water demands. Irrigation equipment is improving all the time. At the end of the 1990s, Hawke's Bay still had border dyke irrigation of pasture; today, modern irrigation equipment is precise and accurate.

There is also an opportunity for recycling of water where possible. For example, water that has been used for a processing plant could be reused as irrigation water on field crops.

Keri Ropiha: I believe better methods need to be engaged and in a much faster timeframe. We are losing so much time deciding on methods while not acting. The Central Government proposal to allow unmetered water storage on private land will lead to misappropriation of water access and availability with no monitoring capacity required through this model. This is more dangerous than current overallocation. For years I've been assured Māori practices are being taught in schools now, aiming to integrate indigenous principles with modern science protocols for advancing shared environmental improvement. The HBRC All-Governors hui are an exciting example of cultural inclusion empowering collective solutions in the Kotahi plan for all of Hawkes Bay.

Wairoa constituency

Kiri Rangirangi-Hamlin: Water discharge recycling or rainfall harvesting in 'on farm' practice or roof harvesting in urban settings, if these micro practices were incentivized on a macro scale our water demand could be addressed. Cropping needs to move away from traditional euro centric practice and adoption of climate adaptive crops that require less irrigation. Nonsensical water take permits cannot continue, a classic example being stupid amounts – millions of litres of water bottled in Whakatu, exported to China and returned to Hawkes Bay to be dumped as 'contaminated' by the plastic bottles, also made in China.

Di Roadley: No comment.

Ngaruroro constituency

Jerf Van Beek: This work began as far back as 2012, when Twyford developed, in conjunction with HBRC, a globalisation of all their consents with HBRC. HBRC should be the enabler rather than the entity that does the work in this space. Water users are developing technology and strategies to assist this thinking. Some examples are: Good Irrigation Practice certification (GIP). Water users are developing thinking around good Irrigation practices being the vehicle to access water. Re-use of domestic and industrial water. Sharing of water through globalisation will reduce the overall use as has been proven in Twyford.

Marcus Ormond: I think it's difficult to influence the amount of water being used at an individual level, however there's always potential to reduce water use by adopting the latest technology.

Māui ki te Raki Māori Regional Constituency

Michelle Mclroy: If you over-allocate wai, you create issues of supply and demand. What I find concerning is that ratepayers are asked to restrict their use in summer. The priority should be water health and protection of the source itself. If we don't look after this taonga, it will be depleted – and you cannot replace it once it's gone.

Shelton White: Yes, we are, with constant monitoring in place across the region the data collected over 100 sites gives us the ability to manage and control our water usage. The possibilities may differ throughout the region and is dependent on water quality and demand.

Māui ki te Tonga Māori Regional Constituency

Thompson Hokianga: I believe HBRC could be doing more to reduce water demand across the region. The emphasis remains on supply-heavy infrastructure like dams, while demand-side solutions are underutilised. We need to shift our thinking from short-term fixes to long-term resilience.

Reducing water demand isn't just a technical challenge it's a mokopuna decision. It's about making choices today that honour our responsibilities to future generations. As previously stated:

- Reduce over-allocation of water consents in stressed catchments.
- Restore wetlands and riparian zones to recharge aquifers.
- Halt gravel extraction to protect natural recharge processes.
- 'Embed mātauranga Māori and cultural risk assessments in water planning.

These aren't just today's solutions they're tomorrow's safeguards.

Do you believe HBRC is doing too much or too little with respect to adapting and/or mitigating climate change impacts in the region?

Hastings/HN constituency

Conrad Waitoa: Climate change is already shaping how we live, grow food, and manage risk. HBRC has a Climate Action Plan, but full integration into core council strategies is still developing. Adaptation and mitigation need to be built into infrastructure, land use, investment decisions, and

partnerships with mana whenua. I stand for your local vote to help make climate response a regular part of every decision, not a separate conversation.

Bruce Mackay: I think we are in the early stages of developing policies around adapting to or mitigating climate change impacts. The evidence I see supporting Climate Change is focused on more extreme weather events, extended dry periods, or more intense rain events. Water storage is a positive in both situations.

Sophie Siers: Adaptation is critical, and the flood resilience programme must be driven by the best available climate modelling. That means planning not just for today's risks, but for what's coming. Mitigation is harder in a region so heavily reliant on agriculture, but that doesn't mean we can't do better. It means we have to be smart and targeted about where we can make the biggest difference. Agri and hort best practice techniques which grow soil carbon, retain water, decrease our reliance on fertilisers that impact negatively on our ecology and environment and which have smart erosion control and planting plans are a big part of this conversation. The significance of this work is not understood widely enough, and it's not being talked about enough although the Future Farming Trust is doing good work in this area.

Jock Mackintosh: Our focus needs to be on mitigation. Cyclone Gabrielle was a devastating reminder of what can happen. Following Gabrielle HBRC undertook a huge programme of urgent works removing silt, repairing stop banks and a range of other flood repairs. Now the focus is on better flood resilience for those areas that are still exposed. This will take another two years and will cost \$250m. Beyond that is region wide flood resilience and this will take a number of years to design and complete. So this is a vast work programme and doesn't even include what we are doing to mitigate the other side of the coin and that is drought resilience.

Napier constituency

Neil Kirton: Options available for the regional council to mitigate climate change are extremely limited. The council's most realistic response is to accelerate flood protection and implement water security strategies. Promoting land use change and undertaking major planting projects to limit sedimentation into our waterways, completes the three major priorities the council has set to meet the climate change challenge.

Paul Bailey: Whilst mitigation against climate change is important, I see councils focus has changed more to adaptation to climate change because they are having to deal with the consequences of Cyclone Gabrielle and sea level rise. This is also perhaps because they see mitigation as more of an issue for the central government rather than local government.

In saying that I would advocate for a ban on the mining of fossil fuels, especially fracking, in the Regional Resource Management Plan (or whatever replaces it). I also believe that as we grapple with the issue of water security it will become self-evident that using irrigation for dairying on the Ruataniwha Plains is a poor use, both economically and environmentally, of this precious resource which is likely to lead to a reduction of the dairy herd in Hawke's Bay thereby leading to a reduction in methane emissions.

Hinewai Ormsby: We're doing more than ever before – but the pace must pick up. Climate change is already reshaping our region: through floods, drought, insurance retreats, and community trauma. It's no longer a future threat – it's our present reality. As Chair, I've embedded climate adaptation

into every major decision we make. But I want to see bolder action: clean public transport, restored wetlands, emission targets, a green workforce pipeline, and investment in climate-resilient infrastructure. It's time to lead like the next generation is watching – because they are.

Hayley Browne: I think there is a lot more to be done. The Climate Action Joint Committee has developed a strategy that exists but is not yet fully implemented. If that committee is not re-established after the election, I will look to see where it fits within HBRC's role. I believe the Council's primary role is in leadership and creating the right conditions for innovation and change to happen. Adaptation and mitigation have to be carried out by our community. Councils cannot do this for people, but we can empower our people and economy to make good choices for their futures.

Syed Khurram Icbal: Grossly insufficient. Reallocate 30% of HBRC's \$15M cleanup budget to wetland restoration (absorbs 1.4M litres/ha) and native afforestation—cutting floods while sequestering carbon.

Louise Parsons: HBRC declared a climate emergency in 2019, but when Cyclone Gabrielle hit in 2023, there was no warning and no real readiness. Emergency should mean urgency- not empty words. After the cyclone, a review made 44 recommendations, yet here we are, over two years later, no safer than before.

According to the rhetoric behind the climate change warning we are going to get more severe weather events, and they will be worse, yet we don't see anyone who declared it making us any safer, or was it meant just for others to be active participants. Declaring a climate emergency was just political posturing. Real leadership is about taking action, not just frivolous announcements and slogans. HBRC's approach to their *own* declaration of *climate emergency* has been passive at best.

I hear "emergency", and think "we must act", but it's been radio silence from them since announcing it.

CHB constituency

Tim Aitken: They have made progress, but it's still not enough. We must implement mitigation, particularly in flood control, land use, and water security, while stabilising the financial burden for ratepayers. At the same time, there are opportunities going forward, supporting more sustainable farming practices, expanding water storage, and restoring wetlands to help with flood protection. These measures safeguard our environment and open up new economic opportunities for Hawke's Bay.

Tony Kuklinski: HBRC needs to be reasonable and practical in its approach to climate change. Farmers are in the environment every day, planting poles to slow soil erosion, fencing off waterways and riparian planting, while also carrying out their own pest control. Also a lot of good work is being done in the various catchment groups.

It's the work on the ground that matters, such as improving flood resilience for our residents, supporting water storage as well as other nature based solutions. Two possible remedies include managed aquifer recharge where winter water is pumped into the ground to help improve ground water, and braided river recharge to help our ground water minimum flows in the summer months.

Keri Ropiha: I feel HBRC are implementing systems to assist in a most challenging, somewhat controversial environment of doers and nay sayers. Climate change needs levels of mitigation including land-use change opportunities to reverse current states of intense environmental damage.

We can no longer ignore generations of degradation at our own hands, for our own benefit, and I do believe HBRC are working hard to find best solutions, best practice, and best outcomes for our region. I want to be part of that legacy that leaves this place better than we found it, for my moko, and for his moko's.

Wairoa constituency

Kiri Rangirangi-Hamlin: Nobody expected a Tsunami from the mountains and to be fair to the current Council, they have been responding to the damage left by a cyclone. As we move back to 'Business As Usual' climate adaptation needs to become a key focus. Growing water demand, the pressure to commodify water, water quality degradation are all paradigms that require strategic planning, land usage and erosion risk, discharge, waste management, future proofing against inundation, the list goes on... short answer... too little... but hopefully not too late.

Di Roadley: Climate change must be at the forefront of everything HBRC does. What worked—or didn't work—in the past won't be enough as we face rising sea levels, more severe storms, and harsher droughts. Hawke's Bay's economy is heavily reliant on agriculture and horticulture, which makes us particularly vulnerable if we fail to adapt and mitigate.

We need to act with urgency. That means making brave, pragmatic, and proactive decisions—not waiting until we're forced into expensive, reactive responses that cause real harm to our communities. The speed of change is accelerating, and HBRC must keep pace.

But council action alone is not enough—our communities must also support and engage with change opportunities as they arise. When HBRC reaches out, we must respond and get involved. Complacency cannot be our legacy and the whole community must take responsibility for our future.

I believe HBRC is making progress, but we must do more. We must continue to embed climate resilience into every policy, every investment, and every community conversation. The cost of inaction is too high—and the opportunity to lead with purpose is ours to take.

Ngaruroro constituency

Jerf Van Beek: Adaptation is considered necessary to ensure the safety of people, land, and infrastructure. The economic impact of mitigation measures may affect the ability to fund adaptation efforts, and mitigation is anticipated to have limited effectiveness. In the upcoming term, HBRC will focus on flood protection, coastal hazards and water security. The affordability of such projects is a major factor in determining what HBRC can pursue. Drawing on global examples may help in designing and constructing cost-effective infrastructure with long-term resilience.

Marcus Ormond: Neither, I think they have got it about right.

Māui ki te Raki Māori Regional Constituency

Michelle McIlroy: We need to seriously address the elephant in the room – carbon emissions and the national issue driven largely by agricultural impacts. HBRC must be bold in advocating for true emissions reductions, supporting land use change, and building genuine climate resilience in partnership with local communities.

Shelton White: We can never do enough to mitigate climate change. I believe prevention is always better than cure. More investment on our lakes and rivers to reduce the impacts of climate change such as flooding, erosion and bio-hazards would be my top priority.

Māui ki te Tonga Māori Regional Constituency

Thompson Hokianga: I think a lot more should be done. Climate resilience starts with restoring our taiao and empowering our communities, not waiting for the next 'disaster'.

Do you *personally* support retaining Māori seats at your council table?

Hastings/HN constituency

Conrad Waitoa: Yes. Māori seats reflect our country's founding agreement and recognise that true partnership must be built into the structure of our councils. These seats bring valuable perspectives that come from deep cultural connections and generations of lived experience. That is one of the reasons I am standing for your local vote to strengthen inclusive representation and partnership.

Bruce Mackay: No.

Sophie Siers: Yes. My experience working alongside Māori ward representatives and through co-governance, such as on the Tangata Whenua Wastewater Committee at HDC, has been positive. Māori governance brings broad, long-term thinking and a depth of perspective that in my opinion benefits everyone.

Jock Mackintosh: Yes I do and I support our Maori Councillors at the table. The two we had in this term – Thompson Hokianga and Charlie Lambert didn't drive a Maori agenda, but they did give a Maori perspective and that was important. That said I look forward to the day (and I hope it's not too far off) when we don't need Maori seats.

Napier constituency

Neil Kirton: HBRC Maori constituencies introduced in 2022 have proven successful in ensuring a mana whenua voice on council. It is my firm belief that, just as we have Maori parliamentary seats, we have a richer, smarter democracy with that voice around the table.

Paul Bailey: I think the question should be considered more as; Do you think Maori are a community of interest significant enough to deserve representation in much the same way as the communities of Wairoa and Central Hawke's Bay have?

Notwithstanding council's obligations under Te Tiriti I believe that Maori do have a community of interest significant enough to deserve representation. Therefore I will be personally voting in favor of retaining Maori wards.

Hinewai Ormsby: As HBRC's first wahine Māori Chair, I support Māori wards. They ensure Tiriti-based representation and bring essential perspectives to regional challenges like climate adaptation and freshwater health.

Hayley Browne: Yes. I have seen the value that they provide in councils. As kaitiaki, our Māori leaders often take a much longer term view and can cut through some of the short-term thinking that three-year political cycles incentivise, leading to decisions that help everyone thrive.

Syed Khurram Icbal: Yes. As Commissioner, I uphold Te Tiriti. Māori wards rectify historical exclusion and enable co-governance for waterway restoration.

Louise Parsons: All of my answers are my personal views, you'll always get that from me, popular or not. I don't support any fixed wards. Representation should reflect capability, not allocation. Māori wards are undemocratic and were introduced without any public mandate. There is a referendum this election, and I'll fully support whatever the people decide.

CHB constituency

Tim Aitken: No, I do not support Māori wards. I voted against them in Central Hawke's Bay because I believe everyone should have the same rights and representation. Councillors should work for the interests of all people in our community. We must strive for unity and inclusiveness without creating separate seats based on race.

Tony Kuklinski: I encourage everyone to register to vote in the referendum, learn about the issue and to then vote.

Keri Ropiha: I do believe in retaining Māori seats at the council table. I don't see why it's a contentious issue or offends non-Māori. Māori seats do not create privilege, extra votes or special voting rights. If you are on the Māori roll you can only vote in Māori electorates. If you are on the general roll you vote in general electorates. You cannot register or vote in both rolls. One roll, one vote. We are all equal. If Māori seats are held to a referendum, it should apply for rural and community seats. Māori wards are being singled out as race-based privilege instead of the added value of cultural and indigenous contribution it provides. It's sad.

Wairoa constituency

Kiri Rangirangi-Hamlin: 100% in support of Māori seats as this demonstrates Te Tiriti responsiveness, and directly addresses the democratic right of indigenous voice.

Di Roadley: Yes, the council table should reflect the communities it serves.

Ngaruroro constituency

Jerf Van Beek: No, I do not. It is not democracy if one can choose which electoral roll to be on depending on who might stand.

Marcus Ormond: Yes.

Māui ki te Raki Māori Regional Constituency

Michelle McIlroy: Absolutely – the seat I am standing for is Māui ki Te Raki. Recognition of tangata whenua rights as affirmed in Te Tiriti benefits all our mokopuna, and especially our taiao. A group of us campaigned in our community for submissions supporting the establishment of Māori seats – and 89% of of submissions were in favour. Also, I want to mihi to all our Tangata Tiriti whānau who believe in an equitable Aotearoa – tēnei te mihi.

Shelton White: Yes, it would be an asset to the entire community to retain these Māori seats. We need to have a presence at the table and play a key role in co-governance and decision making. It would be prudent to involve input from the wider cross section of the community for all concerned.

Māui ki te Tonga Māori Regional Constituency

Thompson Hokianga: I publicly supported the retention of the Māori Ward seats because they uphold the mana of tangata whenua in governance and ensure our voices aren't sidelined, they're central. These seats carry our stories, our struggles, and our solutions. Our whānau deserve more than acknowledgment we deserve representation that reflects who we are.

I've seen firsthand the power of community when we stand together. In 2021, our people spoke through submissions and I stood among them, sharing our whakaaro with council and in 2024 HBRC voted unanimously to keep Māori wards. Today, I continue that journey not for titles, but for transformation.

Does Hawke's Bay need five councils, or do you support amalgamation, in any form?

Hastings/HN constituency

Conrad Waitoa: We have water security, flood resilience, high rates, and many other pressing issues to address right now. However, if our communities call for change, then my financial, governance, and business experience will be needed at the table to ensure transparent budgeting, strong community input, and a clear plan for democratic decision-making. That is one of the reasons I am standing for your local vote to bring thoughtful, inclusive, and fiscally responsible leadership to the table.

Bruce Mackay: I support amalgamation.

Sophie Siers: [Need 5 councils] ... Probably not. I fully understand people's need to feel represented locally. But there are efficiencies that could be achieved, either through amalgamation or shared services. More collaboration is essential.

Jock Mackintosh: Yes I do support amalgamation and I voted for it when the referendum was held in 2015. It's a frustrating subject though. Superficially most people do support it, but when it comes to the crunch they often vote against it which is what happened last time. If we want better, more efficient local government (and who doesn't) then amalgamation is a very good way to achieve that.

Napier constituency

Neil Kirton: No. we do not need five Hawke's Bay councils. Nor do we need 64 politicians and close to 2,000 bureaucrats serving less than 180,000 constituents. We cannot afford it. The administrative handbrake on the region's growth must be removed with an amalgamated council.

Paul Bailey: One of the lessons I learnt from my previous term was how the territorial authorities seemed to be more interested in patch protection rather than thinking regionally. As an example the hiatus over the Coastal Hazards work where neither HDC nor NCC appear to be interested in contributing financially so stalling this important work stream.

Given that Napier and Hastings have grown closer together socially and economically since the completion of the expressway, I believe that they now have a more common community of interest than they ever have. Therefore I would support amalgamation of NCC and HDC however I believe that CHBDC, WDC and HBRC should be kept as separate entities.

In any event my views are irrelevant on this issue which would either be decided by the central government or by referendum.

Hinewai Ormsby: Our people want leadership that works together — not just fewer logos. I don't support top-down amalgamation, but I do support shared services, regional strategies, and stronger collaboration. We need to be efficient without losing local voice. When we focus on outcomes — housing, water, climate resilience — people care less about boundaries and more about results. Let's serve them better, together. But we also need to make sure there is a division of responsibilities where the fox isn't left guarding the hen house when it comes to regulation and enforcement.

Hayley Browne: I believe democracy needs more, not less, localism. The real question is not how many councils we have, but whether each level of government is focused on the right things. Some services are best delivered close to the community, where local voices matter most. Others, where everyone wants the same outcome regardless of where they live, can be centralised. And some, like rivers and environmental management, are most effective at a regional or catchment level. The challenge is that right now, the balance is not right, and that is what needs fixing. I like models such as Manchester's, which show how we can reorganise responsibilities in ways that bring decisions closer to people. For me, form should always follow function: we should design structures around what best serves communities, not the other way around.

Syed Khurram Icbal: Support shared services, not merger. Align strategies (e.g., Future Development Strategy) and pool climate resources—retaining local voice while boosting efficiency.

Louise Parsons: If our elected officials truly put the region first, amalgamation would be a no-brainer.

Right now, councils don't talk to each other. Ratepayers get caught in the middle, which of course includes homeowners and renters alike. Shared services are talked about but not delivered. Each council is too busy protecting its turf, and their jobs, instead of focusing on progress and what's best for the people they serve.

Imagine how much stronger the Hawke's Bay could be if we worked together as one region with one vision. Economic growth and environmental outcomes both improve when we stop duplicating effort and start collaborating.

And yes, *that* would lower rates.

CHB constituency

Tim Aitken: We need to examine duplication and inefficiency. I'm open to greater shared services or some form of amalgamation if it means better value for ratepayers. What matters most is delivering effective services and strong leadership without adding layers of cost or bureaucracy.

Tony Kuklinski: I've always supported shared services where possible between councils. I'm always concerned for less populated areas like Central Hawke's Bay, if they are being amalgamated with more highly populated areas. Generally amalgamation is done on a 'per population basis' and the current Regional Council set up is an example of this where CHB only has one seat at the table out of 11 councillors (less than 10% of the vote) whereas CHB is comprised of nearly 25% of all of the land area of Hawke's Bay. CHB's voice in this system is less than it should be. It may be more sensible to integrate services with the close but similar sized councils to the south of Waipukurau.

Keri Ropiha: I would support amalgamation if an appropriate, adequate and agreeable structure is available and implementable. Given our geographical and demographic populations, it is hard to see an easy solution, but I am open to suggestions that offer equitable solutions for mutual benefit across our region.

Wairoa constituency

Kiri Rangirangi-Hamlin: 100% in support of amalgamation. Amalgamation lowers operational overheads, ensures a more 'holistic' approach to 'functionality' of governance and could be structured to ensure adequate representation across existing ward structures. Imagine the day a resource consent goes to 'one' planning department, the decisions made in that department are checked for actual environmental outcomes, cultural significance before land usage changes are rubberstamped.

Di Roadley: Our community cannot afford the luxury of 5 council structures we must move to a Unitary authority.

Ngaruroro constituency

Jerf Van Beek: Amalgamation is a discussion we need to have urgently. And yes, I am supportive of amalgamation.

Marcus Ormond: I support amalgamation.

Māui ki te Raki Māori Regional Constituency

Michelle McIlroy: Some decisions must stay local – for example, Civil Defence, where local knowledge truly saves lives and as I personally experienced in two consecutive floods in Wairoa – the community resilience and leadership is where it is really at. As tangata whenua I saw first-hand how Marae stepped up to support, house and feed the displaced. Any move toward amalgamation must be driven by the people and reflect their voices and needs.

Shelton White: Yes, I believe Hawkes Bay needs 5 councils. No, I do not support amalgamation in any form.

Māui ki te Tonga Māori Regional Constituency

Thompson Hokianga: Hawke's Bay needs to revisit the amalgamation discussion.

Would you support Councils appointing an independent “Hawke's Bay Auditor General” to monitor councils' spending and programme performance?

Hastings/HN constituency

Conrad Waitoa: I have been in governance and director leadership roles for twenty-seven years and would never answer a question like this without facts. This kōrero belongs with the region's newly elected mayors, chairs, councilors, and chief executives. Oversight already exists through the Auditor General, Audit New Zealand, and internal Risk and Audit Committees. None of their reports calls for

a separate regional auditor. I stand for your local vote to ensure decisions are based on evidence, not assumptions. A seat at the table means acting on facts, not guessing.

Bruce Mackay: I would rather focus on effective financial budgeting and planning “before the event” than auditing “after the event”. It then becomes the responsibility of the managers and governors to perform.

Sophie Siers: No. My opinion is that Councils budgeting and expenditure is already well detailed and monitored through the current annual and long term planning process. I wouldn't support burdening ratepayers with more expense for what I feel would achieve very little.

Jock Mackintosh: On the face of it yes, but monitoring things like programme performance is a massive task and the auditor general could easily become a bureaucracy in itself. Also comparing HBRC with say Hastings and Napier, is not that helpful because their operations are quite different. I would support comparative analysis alongside similar Councils. For example, how does HBRC stack up against the other Regional Councils in New Zealand in such things as rates, staff numbers etc. This creates valid comparisons and is easier information to collect

Napier constituency

Neil Kirton: No. just another silly administrative burden that achieves nothing. Councils are legislated, berated, scrutinized, audited and monitored to the point where little else gets done. These administrative costs amount to tens of millions each year. Let's stop this madness and give the ratepayer a break!

Paul Bailey: Whenever councils do internal reviews of spending and performance, I'm reminded of the saying that 'Turkeys don't vote for an early Christmas'. Therefore I would be in favour of something like a 'Hawke's Bay Auditor General' as you have suggested.

Hinewai Ormsby: Transparency is the foundation of public trust and ratepayers deserve to know that every dollar is well spent, and that decisions are backed by evidence and values. However, at HBRC we evidence every dollar budgeted for and spent in our long term and annual plans, and local government is subject to annual performance audits by the Department for Internal Affairs, and we also livestream all our Council meetings. Appointing an auditor general inevitably incur significant extra cost employing this person and his team to audit the information, as well as council staff time to prepare and evidence the reports. If the whole thing cost an extra \$500,000 at a guess per year, my question I'd want to weigh up is whether we're better spent installing 1,000 water meters, planting 100,000 native trees into wetlands, or installing 5,000 possum traps a year.

Hayley Browne: Councils are already audited annually by the Auditor-General, but those audits don't provide much constructive feedback or benchmarking; they are more of a pass or fail assessment. I'd like to see the existing process add more value to leadership on how councils can improve, rather than creating a new layer that simply duplicates what we already have.

Syed Khurram Icbal: Essential. An auditor would expose HBRC's \$1.2M/year consultant waste and 22-month delays—driving accountability as I did slashing carry-forwards by 25%.

Louise Parsons: It's obvious our councils are overspending, the \$14 million stop bank that won't protect us is just one example. The flawed buy-out process another bad decision with millions wasted.

I'm deeply sceptical when I hear the word "independent." Who pays them? Who appoints them? That's what really determines how independent someone is.

Before we create another high-paying watchdog role, let's ask why we're already paying massive fees to LGNZ. And let's hold the people we've already hired, Council CEOs and Chairs properly accountable.

Rate capping is one way to rein in waste. The real question isn't whether we need a new watchdog, what we should be asking is; Why is our current leadership not doing their job and why is there so much distrust and apathy towards council right now.

Before looking outside for solutions, we need to look inward to assess current capability and rectify current spending.

CHB constituency

Tim Aitken: No, I would not support this. While accountability is important, creating an additional layer of bureaucracy isn't the answer. We already have systems in place for auditing and oversight, and I believe we should strengthen and properly use those rather than adding another costly structure for ratepayers to fund.

Tony Kuklinski: My question would be: Who's going to pay for that? If the Regional Council is paying, that means rate payers are paying again. Currently the Regional Council has an effectiveness and efficiency review going on, and in the long term plan the current Regional Council has reduced next year's rate increase from 18% to 9.5%. So although I'm not happy about the rate increase, it is heading in the right direction. The government, sometime after the local body elections, is going to announce some changes to the Resource Management Act which I suspect will lead to far less planners and red tape. This is likely to lead to less expenses at the Regional Council.

Keri Ropiha: Sure, if it means better outcomes for our community and future.

Wairoa constituency

Kiri Rangirangi-Hamlin: I am supportive of audit, especially performance audit, but have an issue with merged approach where a 'Bean-counter' measures all the outcomes. Too often environmental protections are qualitative and not measurable in \$\$\$\$ If an Auditor General was appointed the spending should be measured by an accountant and the program measured by the relevant 'subject matter' experts.

Di Roadley: In principle, I'm drawn to the idea of appointing an independent "Hawke's Bay Auditor General"—transparency and accountability are vital. However, I struggle to see sufficient value returned for what would be a significant investment. Community funds are already stretched thin, and we have existing checks and balances in place to monitor council spending and performance.

Each council is facing a pipeline of expensive infrastructure and climate resilience projects. Unless retrospective evaluations are actively used to shape future decisions, such an initiative risks becoming a costly exercise with limited impact.

The real issue lies in the structural constraints of local government. Long-term plans are often rigid, and set in a different financial environment, while rates—our primary revenue tool—are blunt and

inflexible. Councils need more responsive funding mechanisms. I support reform that opens up new revenue streams, including:

- Crown-owned properties contributing to rates
- A portion of GST being returned to local councils
- Progressing initiatives like a regional bed tax

We must focus on reforms that empower councils to act swiftly and strategically—not add more layers of oversight that may not deliver tangible benefits to our communities.

Ngaruroro constituency

Jerf Van Beek: This particular idea requires further consideration. I support councils being held to clear core business definitions and strict spending guidelines.

Marcus Ormond: No.

Māui ki te Raki Māori Regional Constituency

Michelle McIlroy: I support greater accountability and independent oversight – ratepayers deserve transparency and trust in how funds are being used. Whether it's an Auditor General or some other independent authority, the principle is to ensure wise use of public funds. Times are tough – people want confidence that their money is being well spent.

Shelton White: Yes, Transparency is key.

Māui ki te Tonga Māori Regional Constituency

Thompson Hokianga: I'd want to see concrete examples of where similar models have worked and where they haven't before committing. If a Hawke's Bay Auditor General could:

- Ensure transparency across councils, especially in Three Waters, climate adaptation, and environmental protection,
- Include mana whenua oversight and cultural impact assessments,
- And report directly to the public with clear, accessible findings

Then at this stage, I'm open to support exploring it further. But we need to ask: will it strengthen kaitiakitanga and community trust, or just add another layer of bureaucracy?