

Name: Kōwhai | Deputy Mayor Kelly Stratford

Ward: Bay of Islands – Whangaroa

Date: 27 August 2024

Meetings/Events Attended

Date	Meeting Topic	Comment
25.7.24	Business Call	North Chamber representative joined us for the first time. The call is for business association reps across our district and we are joined by MSD, ACC, NZTA, Northland Inc and sometimes FENZ and others by invitation. Community Board chairs have a standing invite, as well as the transport portfolio holders and economic development chair.
	District Plan hearings 2 & 3	Site visits across the district for the special zoning section.
31.7.24	Council agenda preview	
1.8.24	Housing Portfolio	See report below
2.8.24	Tumu Taupua, Kahika, Kōwhai	CE, Mayor and Deputy catch up
8.8.24	Tumu Taupua, Kahika, Kōwhai	CE, Mayor and Deputy catch up
	Council Hui	
	GM District Facilities	Talking through issues that I have been following up.
9.8.24	Te Mauora Canopy Imaging	Ngāti Rehia hosted with Canopy Imaging. Special mention to the landowners, enabling this to happen. Beautiful space. First MRI and CT on it's way – north of Whangarei! Also, a space for everyone to feel comfortable. Ngāti Rehia, especially wanted it to be a space that Māori would not have hesitation in coming, they took that into consideration feeding in to the interior decoration.
10.8.24	Official Opening of Flood Mitigation projects	I was presented with the symbolic key to Pokapu Bridge, which acknowledges that FNDC now are responsible for it, now that NRC have successfully completed the project. I acknowledged the speed and quality workmanship, and relationships they maintained & also magnitude of all the flood mitigation projects that have taken at least 3 decades of community voices pushing for.

13.8.24	Hearing 5 Proposed District Plan	Public Access and Activities on the surface of water. Heard lots on connectivity and development contributions and financial contributions.
14.8.24	Police Advisory Group hui	Graffiti and wandering stock the biggest issue being raised for the area of Kawakawa and Moerewa and surrounds.
15.8.24	Tumu Taupua, Kahika, Kōwhai	
20.8.24	Te Maruata	As below
	Transpower	Reiterated the report findings for Glorit power outage. Discussed some of our concerns about power pricing, they explained the Electricity providers and the commission are the snag there. We also discussed our desire to have a more resilient network in the Far North.
21 – 23.8.24	LGNZ Conference	As below
26.8.24	Mayoral Forum	Renewable Energy Zones a key discussion point. https://www.transpower.co.nz/projects/renewable-energy-zones
	Local Waters Done Well	FNDC:DIA to discuss timelines and next steps for engagement on our Water Services Plan
27.8.24	Extraordinary Council Hui agenda preview	

I needed to take a week off to be with Nan after she fell & ended up in hospital. Appreciate the understanding shown whilst I took that time, and the ongoing understanding as we support her in her recovery.

Community Matters

Topic	Comment
Graffiti	Report to police, they are having success reprimanding offenders
Wandering stock	Report to police and NZTA if state highway, and FNDC if a local road (for enforcement)
Russell WWTP	Public works act inquiry
Hihitahi Rise	Still waiting for a timeline for this project

Ohaeawai stormwater	Still waiting for a timeline and confirmation of this work
Otaha Road	Weeds impeding visibility on the corner.
Laundromat	Moerewa has no wastewater treatment plant. Community and hapū are concerned that a consent may be granted for discharge into the river for the new laundromat.
Kaitaia Drainage	Ongoing issues concerning poor or lack of management of drainage districts in Te Hiku. The farmers there are having their economic viability impacted by council lack of action on works they have been rating them for, and enforcement of a drainage bylaw.
Coopers Beach Playground	RFS4172972 still unresolved. No response from Infrastructure team.
Kohukohu Town Hall	Concerns regarding the unsuccessful funding application. What next, for this high-profile historic hall please, ensuring it stays open, and is not degrading.

Portfolio Update: (Housing)

- An issue that keeps coming up is the Rating Act and application of SUIPs
- In the housing portfolio hui we had an update on the status of actions for the Housing Interim Action Plan; heard about the housing consortium FNHL are proposing with CHPs; the short-term accommodation report on AirBNB carried out by Infometrix; we also had an update from MHUD on government policy and funding decisions on social housing; discussed submission being pulled together on Granny Flats legislation.

Portfolio Update: (Climate Change)

- Stage One of the Community Adaptation Programme is beginning. Under this Programme, Council supports communities in decisions on adapting to flooding and coastal hazards, like sea level rise, erosion, and inundation.
- As per the Climate Action policy measuring of our organisation's 2023 financial year and 2024 financial year emissions footprint is underway. Staff have set what is included and excluded in Council's footprint and are collecting data from 36 different types of emissions sources. This is an audited process to meet requirements on annual emissions reporting under Council's adopted Climate Action Policy. The 2023 financial year will be the baseline year. Staff will present the 2023 and 2024 financial year reports to Te Kuaka Komiti by end of 2024 and to Council early 2025.

Portfolio Update: (Emergency Management)

- We were successful in our funding application via Crown funding and the Minister for Emergency Management and Recovery, \$220,000 to support property categorisation as part of the Future of Severely Affected Land project.
- Cyclone Gabrielle Recovery Report will be coming out soon – shows Northland CDEM Recovery team's role in coordinating government and non-government agencies in Recovery, as per the National Plan Order. Covers the recovery to the end of June 2024. There are still some actions to be completed by June 2025. And of course, some – especially rebuilding roads – will likely continue to 2030 and beyond.

Matters for Discussion

- Local Water Done Well is one of the big behind the scenes issues right now. More information on the government decisions here <https://www.dia.govt.nz/Water-Services-Policy-Future-Delivery-System>
- Development Contributions
- Connection to the internet when road naming has not been confirmed. Our Chief Digital Officer was recently able to assist in getting some properties connected to broadband, outside of what has been the usual process. I believe this needs to be part of operating system to speed up what has been previously a lengthy process due to the hold-up waiting for LINZ. Which then goes through the community board.

Training / Conference Attendance

Name of Event: Te Maruata

Date of Event: 20th August 2024

Learnings: The importance of staying focused on our roles, activating within our lanes, and preparing our communities for the challenges ahead, especially as we approach the upcoming election year.

Value for the organisation: The council can draw on the wisdom of the Raupo whakataukī—when the wind blows, it will be down; when it stops, it stands again—emphasizing resilience and adaptability. We must ensure that our spaces are welcoming for rangatahi Māori and continue to prioritize civics education. Above all, it is crucial to keep our conversations simple and meaningful, engaging our whānau in why their participation, particularly in voting, is essential. By fostering these values, we can strengthen our collective ability to navigate the challenges ahead.

Te Maruata provided a powerful platform for deepening our understanding of the challenges and opportunities we face as Māori within local government. The wānanga underscored the idea that Māori are real-time travellers, constantly thinking through the lenses of past, present, and future. This unique perspective is vital in addressing nawe (issues) and rawe (what's good) while focusing on kawē (how to maintain what's good). The kōrero emphasized the importance of knowing your lane, activating within it, and ensuring everyone plays their part. There was a strong reminder that the relationships we nurture within our whānau and hapū are our greatest strength—symbolized by the whakataukī, “If you got knives in your back, it means your whānau and hapū are behind you.” “It's not up to you to decide whether you stand again or not. We will let you know when your time is up!”

Name of Event: Super Local LGNZ Conference

Date of Event: 21st - 23rd August 2024

Learnings: My key learnings from the Super Local LGNZ conference were the practical strategies for advocating within a centralised government framework, the importance of targeted support for our region, and the innovative approaches other councils are using to address similar challenges.

Value for the organisation: Attending the Super Local LGNZ conference provided substantial value to our organisation by equipping me with strategic insights into the latest challenges and trends in local government, including financial sustainability and localism. The conference allowed me to

network with key leaders, fostering relationships that can support our district's initiatives. I also gained exposure to best practices in areas like emergency management and community engagement, which we can adapt to improve our operations. My presence ensured that the unique needs of the Far North District were represented in national discussions, and the knowledge acquired will drive innovation and positive change within our organisation, ultimately enhancing our ability to serve the community effectively.

Wellington Region Emergency Management (WREMO) and National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), LGNZ Super Local Tour

During my visit to the Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMO), I observed several operational structures and strategies that closely align with our own Northland Regional Emergency Management model. Key takeaways from the tour emphasized that the decision to activate emergency management protocols heavily depends on the IMPACTS of an event, rather than a predefined trigger. And as we have seen, it can vary depending on what else is happening or has happened.

Their community response hubs are quite like our community and Marae response groups. However, they are resourcing them.

Wellington City Council Emergency Management Model:

- **Staffing Structure:** Wellington operates with a full-time emergency management coordinator and a dedicated logistics person. The logistics person works on building and maintaining relationships in peacetime. Additionally, a number of staff are seconded into emergency management roles, ensuring that everyone is aware of their responsibilities during an emergency. The full organisational chart is shared and displayed prominently, reinforcing which staff members have a role in emergency response. And how valuable their contribution is.
- **Tākaihere Role:** they have introduced the Tākaihere role, a staff position specifically designed to connect hapū and iwi with the operations team, enhancing the inclusiveness and cultural responsiveness of their emergency management efforts.
- They fund this through rates. And it is on top of their contribution to the regional WREMO

Kapiti Coast District Council Approach: Kapiti Coast District Council has taken a proactive stance by training all their staff in emergency management, ensuring a well-prepared workforce ready to respond to crises.

Insights from NEMA CE Dave Gawn: Dave Gawn shared his experiences, highlighting that many of the challenges faced post-Christchurch earthquakes persist today. The issues are deeply systemic, and given the current fiscal constraints, addressing these challenges may take 5 to 10 years. NEMA continues to play an assurance role in overseeing emergency management practices.

Independent Review Update: NEMA has distanced themselves from the Severe weather review process. The review report is expected to be submitted to the minister by the end of September.

Women's Leadership Lunch: Leading and Thriving During the Women's Leadership Lunch, Nicola Willis highlighted the challenges of local government leadership. The theme of the workshop was, "Local Government is tough on everyone, but especially women." This sentiment resonated deeply, especially given the increasing pressures we have been facing. She announced the Ministry for

Women was working with Netsafe on a toolkit for workplaces supporting women in leadership positions, including for local council candidates. The workshop discussion underscored the importance of resilience, support networks, and the need for collaborative efforts to overcome these challenges.

Official Opening and Pōwhiri at Tākina The conference opened with a powerful pōwhiri at Tākina in Wellington, a location symbolic of New Zealand’s dynamic and challenging environment. The ceremony, which welcomed attendees from across the country, was a reminder of our shared journey in local governance. The mihi whakatau, delivered by the haukainga, was followed by a response from the co-chair of Te Maruata, Iaeen Cranwell and our very own National Council member from Zone 1, Kakiha Mayor of Far North District Council. The ceremony concluded with the presentation of the *Waka Hauora*—a symbol of our collective commitment to wellbeing.

Keynote Insights: Mayor Tory Whanau and Chair Daran Ponter shared their perspectives on the challenges facing local government. Ponter, known for his candid approach, wore his “Activist Chair” shirt. They were followed by the **Rt Hon Christopher Luxon** who highlighted the ongoing need for financial sustainability and transparency in our operations. He acknowledged the good work being done but emphasised the importance of staying vigilant and accountable to our communities.

Regional Deals: A Strategic Opportunity for Northland One of the key sessions I attended was on the upcoming Regional Deals initiative, presented by Minister Simeon Brown. This initiative represents a significant opportunity for Northland to secure long-term funding that aligns with our regional priorities. The process involves expressing interest, establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the government, and entering negotiations. By year-end, up to five regions may finalise these deals, with a focus on those committed to investing in sustainable growth. Northland, with its ongoing push for development and infrastructure improvement, is well-positioned to benefit from this initiative.

Localism and Decentralisation: Empowering Communities Susan Freeman-Greene from LGNZ and Oliver Hartwich from the NZ Initiative underscored the importance of localism. Decentralising decision-making to be closer to our communities has long been advocated, and it’s clear that this approach is essential for effective governance. The call to “shrink the Beehive” and empower local governments resonated strongly, reflecting a growing consensus on the need for systemic change.

Workshops on Local Government Reform, Housing, and Water Services I also participated in a workshop led by Simpson Grierson that focused on critical issues such as local government reform, housing, and water services. These discussions highlighted the need for clear frameworks and strategic planning, particularly in managing climate adaptation and natural hazards. The workshop also addressed the challenges of financial sustainability, with a focus on ensuring that councils are equipped to handle future demands.

Communicating Value: Crafting Effective Narratives Another valuable session focused on how we can better communicate the value of the services we provide. Using libraries as an example, the workshop explored how these community hubs play a crucial role in digital literacy and social cohesion. The key takeaway was the importance of crafting compelling narratives that resonate with both government and the public, ensuring that the full value of our services is understood and appreciated.

Building Authentic Partnerships: Sally Loudon from Scotland provided insights into building authentic partnerships with communities. Her experience highlighted the importance of working

with communities rather than *for* them. By fostering trust and collaboration, local governments can empower communities to take an active role in shaping their futures, leading to more sustainable and meaningful outcomes.

Reflections on Financial Sustainability and Strategic Capacity Sarah Baddeley’s discussion on financial sustainability was particularly timely. She emphasised that “doing nothing is not an option,” especially in the face of rising costs and declining community engagement. Bradley’s points on the importance of strategic capacity and the need for clear decision-making frameworks were a call to action for all of us. It’s vital that we empower our council officers, understand our financial position, and ensure that our strategies are aligned with the long-term needs of our communities.

The Super Local LGNZ conference was a valuable opportunity to reflect on the importance of collaboration, localism, and keeping our communities at the heart of our work. While the conference highlighted the necessity of decentralisation, we need to recognise that the current government may not be inclined to transfer power or resources from central to local government. Given this, we need to focus on what we can control and where we can make an immediate impact.