

Time to manage climate change

Here is a fact.

On July 20, council's Strategy and Policy Committee meeting unanimously passed a motion that clearly stated: "That discussions with key stakeholders continue with the initiative of aligning work on the District Plan Coastal Hazards Policy with regional and national guidance that is currently being prepared."

I moved that motion with full support from councillors to ensure council's commitment to work with its impacted communities is absolutely clear and on record.

It also signals the need for Kapiti and its coastal communities to work with national guidance from central government and cooperation from regional government. Central government is under increasing political pressure, firstly from a very strong Local Government NZ position where all the mayors have supported a position paper calling for urgent action on two fronts. One is on reducing greenhouses gases and the other is on adaptation measures. For most affected communities and councils the immediate concern is the cost of adaptation and the question of who pays — a question especially plaguing councils with coastal communities in urban areas where private property and public infrastructure assets are under threat. There are complex planning, consenting and legal issues.

Secondly, the political pressure has come from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Dr Jan Wright. Last week she made a rallying call to all parties and MPS to take a historic step that would be accredited



Notes from a corner dairy

K Gurunathan
Kapiti Mayor

for generations to come.

"When it comes to climate change, we need to get used to looking decades ahead. The world is going to be a very different place in the future," she said.

The climate change debate, at least locally, seem to be dominated by the coastal hazard discussion. Climate change also means more frequent and intense rainfall leading to stress on under capacity storm water infrastructure and flooding. There is already a projected funding need of more than \$230 million needed in the next few decades to manage this. Where will this funding come from especially given our debt levels?

For some time Council has been pressuring our regional partners, Greater Wellington, to show leadership. Recently they commissioned NIWA for a regional report which will be launched on August 7 at a special region-wide meeting. I congratulate GW and its chair Chris Laidlaw for its leadership in this challenging area. It will be useful to see what the most recent scientific information says about what we can expect on the Kapiti Coast. Council is ready to continue to collaborate and work with our communities to manage these challenges.

Collaboration will need a wide group of stakeholders, including not only those directly affected but also the likes of the insurance industry and others.