



2011 Candidate Questionnaire

Name: _____ Nick Marryatt _____ Party: _____ Greens _____

1. How would you encourage economic development while maintaining sustainable use of resources?

The easy and obvious answer to this question is that future development needs to be based around renewable materials. Usually when people talk of renewable they are talking in terms of renewable electricity generation which, while very important, is not the full extent of renewable. Much of our material goods come from crude oil based polymers or metals both of which are finite materials and we need to be able to find renewable alternatives to these materials. Even the matrix materials used in composites (fibre-glass and carbon fibre) are derived from crude oil and so do not offer an improvement on the metals that they are replacing in terms of sustainability.

This is why increasing the funding that goes to the research and development of these materials and related technologies will be crucial to ensuring that we are ultimately able to use our resources sustainably.

But in the short term there is a lot of other research that can also be encouraged that will help lead to sustainable development, these include a number of other Green party priorities such as organic farming, fisheries management, conservation and sustainable agriculture.

And then there is the renewable energy sector which can drive economic development in the short term, particularly in the Waikato which already has extensive experience in the renewable energy sector particularly in terms of Hydro, Wind and Geothermal power. Our expertise could even be exported to other nations as they try to become more sustainable. Since the majority of New Zealand's renewable energy producers are still owned by the government, the government has a unique power to direct the future development of this sector. I strongly support the Greens target of 100% renewable energy production by 2030 and also our plan to shift the focus of companies like Solid Energy away from practices like lignite mining towards producing sustainable energy.

Resource efficiency is also an important point to consider when talking about sustainability; currently practices like planned obsolescence of electronic products waste a lot of resources. I would really like to see a greater focus on cradle to cradle design for goods as well as greater support for recycling initiatives and the goal of New Zealand becoming a waste free country in the near future.

We need to stop focusing entirely on GDP and instead take account of a variety of other factors including environmental quality when considering development. This is why I support using the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) to measure our economic success, unlike GDP this takes the social and environmental costs of economic development into account to give a more realistic idea of the worth of our economic growth.

2. How would you ensure the use of evidence-based decision-making in policy development and implementation?

I fear that my answer to this question will not make me popular, I cannot think of a way to *ensure* that evidence is behind the decisions made by government. While certain policies of the Green Party will make it more likely that decisions are made on a sound basis (such as our proposal to develop a health impact statement for every government policy and projects), I do not think that will be enough to ensure evidence based decisions in all circumstances.

There is already plenty of evidence available for our decision makers, while putting evidence in front of politicians may help, I feel that the weak link in the evidence based decision making process is the politicians as opposed to any particular policy or way that government departments are structured.

Part of the problem is the speed that politicians like to make decisions, hence the numerous uses of urgency to avoid public submissions (which is often expert evidence) and to take a local example recently the Velodrome was funded before a proper business analysis was done because the government put a deadline on when the local government funding had to come through.

I think that the degree to which decisions are based upon actual evidence is dependent on the people who are making the decisions. To that end I should point out that I have a Bsc and despite spending a lot of time studying post-modernism in my recent social studies courses I still believe that the scientific method is the best way of ascertaining the truth of any given situation. Because of this I quite like to gather as much information as I can before I make a decision, evidence based decision making is my usual way of making decisions.

3. How do you intend to foster vision, leadership, engagement and co-management in your electorate?

I agree that vision, leadership, engagement and co-management are important things to encourage, particularly engagement and co-management I am a great fan of democracy and I find the lack of these last two in governance disturbing. However I had not really given any great thought into how to foster these ideals after the election.

I would however like to avoid fast tracking things through the RMA process I think that this shuts down community engagement with the projects which I rate higher than getting things going quicker. Likewise I would also like to see the government use urgency a lot less than it currently does, ideally only when a bill is actually urgent, again this tends to stifle community involvement in the decision making process. As for co-management I think the best thing

that I could do is to ensure that the new Waikato river co-management arrangements is a success and serve as an example for future co-management opportunities.

4. What do you consider the main environmental issues for Hamilton and what do you think should be done about them?

When I wrote the answer to this question I originally talked about biodiversity loss and water quality as the two biggest environmental issues facing Hamilton, but since the biodiversity loss part of this answer was very similar to the answer for number 6 below I decided to discuss climate change as that is another very important issue and leave biodiversity for question 6.

Water quality is an important issue for the people of Hamilton, as I'm sure you all know many of our local rivers and lakes are filthy and unsafe to swim in. They really need to be cleaned up in order for people to be able to take full advantage of this aspect of our natural environment. But beyond that there are economic benefits to cleaning up our rivers. Most notable is the Waikato's dairy industry, which Hamilton is highly dependent upon for our continued prosperity. The dairy industry benefits from being seen as being a clean, green and safe industry on the international market, if we want to retain this image and the premium it brings we have to turn this into a reality. In New Zealand as a whole water quality impacts negatively on our fishing industry and our biodiversity – in large part due to nitrogen and phosphorous induced algal blooms.

We need to clean up our rivers primarily by bringing in greater regulations around what goes into our waterways. Locally this requires improving the quality of our storm water system and reducing the occasional sewage or industrial discharge that occurs. Outside of Hamilton there needs to be greater monitoring and regulation around the runoff that enters our rivers. There are already plenty of ways to reduce the pollutants that enter waterways we need to create a regulatory environment that will encourage these solutions to be implemented.

One final point on water which needs to be considered is conserving our wetlands which were historically a very common feature of the Waikato environment but now well over 90% of our wetlands have been drained. Wetlands help to improve water quality by filtering out nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous and also reducing the sediment levels in rivers.

Wetlands also have an important role to play in mitigating climate change which is another serious issue that will affect Hamilton. Wetlands of course act as a natural carbon sink helping to reduce our emissions.

Climate change has the potential to be devastating for us, however this is a fairly well known topic and in the interest of saving the reader time I will skip explaining why climate change is bad and move straight on to what should be done about it.

It has become apparent that the major tool for dealing with climate change is going to be the emissions trading scheme. The primary efforts towards minimising the affects of climate change then have to be made via the emissions trading scheme. At the moment the most obvious ways of improving the Emissions trading scheme are to remove the free allocated units much quicker than is currently planned, make it so that these units are not intensity based and so provide a greater incentive for emitters to consider higher emissions when increasing production. Also bringing the industries which are currently outside the emissions trading scheme in sooner will make the scheme more effective in the short term.

Probably the biggest thing that New Zealand as a country could do to address climate change is to stop mining and exporting coal, coal is a material which has to be phased out for both export and domestic use.

Finally it has to be recognised that the efforts of New Zealand will be futile if we cannot convince the rest of the world to also make efforts to address climate change. All I can suggest is that we take a strong stance and show the rest of the world that our economy didn't collapse, our emissions are reducing and we are becoming more sustainable and ask that they join us.

5. What do you consider are the essential features of a sustainable built environment and how would you encourage these to come about?

It seems to me that a sustainable built environment is one which contributes to a sustainable society. I define a sustainable society as being one which allows every person to fully express their humanity both now and in the future.

These built environments have to develop a greater sense of community; people want to live in friendly places with a unique identity. If we were to decentralise retail, education and employment locations, we could create walkable communities that are designed around people rather than cars. Combined with efforts to encourage greater engagement between local government and citizens a spirit of community will result.

Needless to say another important feature of a sustainable built environment will be a quality public transport system. Public transport is far more community focused than private transport while at the same time being more environmentally friendly.

Green spaces and conservation projects are also an important feature of a sustainable built environment. I would like to see a set percentage of every new development set aside to be either maintained or restored to its natural state.

Finally a sustainable built environment must provide outlets for people's desire for recreation and creative tendencies. I think the area where we are currently furthest from the ideal is in our level of public art and this is something which needs to have a greater level of funding.

6. Would you encourage the enhancement of natural ecosystems in Hamilton city and how would you bring this about?

Yes, I think that biodiversity loss is the biggest environmental issue facing Hamilton (and the world). The reason for this is that unlike water quality, which can be reversed and climate change, which can be mitigated and adapted to, biodiversity loss is forever.

In Hamilton we have seen recent improvements to biodiversity resulting from the hard work of groups like Hamilton Halo as well as projects like the Waiwhakareke restoration. However there are still significant ecosystems under threat, I would draw particular attention to our river which has become dominated by the Carp. Continued and increasing support of these

and other community and local government led conservation projects will be important to enhancing our natural ecosystems.

The surviving natural ecosystems have to be preserved and enhanced, frankly I am not the best person to give advice on this topic, my skills are angled more towards the tree planting end of the scale. However that is why we have a Department of Conservation and also why this department needs to have its funding restored and then increased, also DoC creating a recovery plan for all of New Zealand's endangered species will allow us to start slowing the rate of biodiversity loss and eventually halt it, provided that the plans are enacted.

7. What are the principal social issues in Hamilton city and how do you think they should be addressed?

Needless to say there are a lot of social issues in Hamilton from poor housing, lack of quality education and healthcare through to issues like domestic violence but for this question I have chosen to focus in on poverty because undoubtedly poverty (and income inequality more generally) is a huge factor in all of our social problems.

Inequality is growing in the Waikato in a recent report by Anna Cox and Rose Black (*Window on Waikato Poverty: Poverty Action Waikato, Nov 2011*) they show that the Gini co-efficient in the Waikato has risen from about 0.34 in 1989 to just over 0.39 in 2006, I expect it has risen higher in the years since. The great thing about this report is that it goes beyond the numbers and tells the stories of some of the people behind the statistics.

As for addressing poverty I would like to see a variety of changes made, the obvious one is to make the tax system more progressive; lower taxes on the poor, paid for with higher taxes on those that can afford it seems a logical solution to the problem of having so many people being left behind. I also have to mention the Green's proposal to introduce a Capital Gains Tax, capital gains are currently untaxed and primarily enjoyed by the wealthiest individuals in our society it simply makes the tax system fairer to tax capital gains.

I would also like to see a Universal Basic Income introduced, although I hasten to add that it is Green party policy to look at bringing this in, ie. It is something to consider for the future rather than now. Frankly I think that making sure that every single adult gets enough money to live on is something any country should do and I think would go a long way to ending the worst aspects of poverty in New Zealand. I would also like to see benefits linked to the cost of living so that when prices rise dramatically the poorest members of our society are not stuck on a shrinking (real) income. Another easy way to improve the welfare system is to extend the in work tax credits to beneficiaries, I simply find it hard to justify giving this extra \$60 a week to a family on the minimum wage while an identical family on a benefit lower than the minimum wage does not.

I also think that improvements can be made to accessing education, primarily through ensuring that education is actually free and removing the cap on people being allowed into tertiary study and funding a greater variety of adult and bridging courses to up skill people who may have fallen out of mainstream education.

Finally there is the question of wages, I think the minimum wage needs to be increased, there are an awful lot of families struggling to make ends meet and frankly, if the minimum wage is not enough to support a family on then it needs to be raised. I do however acknowledge that in the short term there will be unemployment issues with regards to raising the minimum wage which is why I think that it is important that while the minimum wage is increased at a rapid rate the government actively work to create employment opportunities for people and give financial support to small businesses. Needless to say that the Greens have planned to set aside money for the latter and have a plan to create 100,000 jobs, far more than the 3,000 jobs that would be lost in the worst case prediction by the Department of Labour. Ultimately I think the solution to keeping wages high and lowering inequality is to keep unemployment low, something which New Zealand governments definitely need to work on.

8. Do you have any other comments?

Sorry if this is a bit longer than you expected but there was a lot to talk about, I did try to be brief.