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**WRC candidate name: *Brian Habberfield***

*Please type in the space below each question, and use as much space as you require for each answer.*

*Please email your responses back to [info@sustainablewaikato.org.nz](mailto:info@sustainablewaikato.org.nz) not later than **Monday, September 5<sup>th</sup> 2016**.*

**1. What do you think are the top three challenges facing the Waikato region that WRC could influence over the next five to ten years?**

I think the top three challenges facing the Waikato now are;

Accommodating and servicing population growth/Auckland spread, and resultant traffic build.

Conserving and protecting our production soils (changes in use, erosion, contamination, noxious weeds/pathogens)

Properly restoring biodiversity, through habitat restoration, species management, and comprehensive predator control.

**2. Do you believe the Regional Council has a role in economic development and in what ways?**

Of course the Regional Council has a role in economic development, and it is written into its mandate. Clearly economies are not local, and are linked, so the Regional Council has a broader role in assisting integrated and co-operative models of development. With its extensive knowledge of the physical aspects of the region, development can be guided in areas where it is most appropriate in terms of land use, and less vulnerable to natural hazards. A major role is of course monitoring environmental effects, and working with companies to develop low impact strategies in their operations. The overarching responsibility of the Regional council to protect the environmental capital of the region assists economic development in many ways, tourism is growing hugely and it is largely our landscapes that drive this, talented people are drawn to live and work in quality environments, healthier environments mean a healthier and more productive workforce.

**3. What do you consider to be the main biodiversity and biosecurity issues within the Waikato region, and how can WRC best address them?**

The main biodiversity issues are pretty obvious, and a lot of work is already being done to address them, particularly in education. Loss of habitat, predation, threats from existing and new invasive plants and organisms, trends toward larger scale more intensive farming operations and monoculture. I believe that community programs like EnviroSchools are brilliant, and funding and technical support for community initiative around things like riparian

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planting, pest trapping etc. is invaluable. On a larger scale, working with farming groups and industrial operators to develop lower impact strategies, setting standards and targets, and compliance monitoring, can address some of these issues.

Biosecurity issues would centre around the fact that the two main ports in the country are proximate to our region, and the bulk of cargoes would be transported through our region at some point. Added to that air travel, most arrivals at Auckland would eventually travel through the Waikato. Ships not only bring cargoes, but marine organisms, on hulls but critically in ballast tanks that are flushed offshore. Regional Council needs to continue to work in close co-operation and support of other agencies in this area.

**4. What are the major challenges to improving freshwater quality in the Waikato region, and, as a councillor, what would be your priorities?**

The main factor affecting freshwater quality is farming. After that human populations, related to sewage treatment, stormwater, and road runoff. Litter, and illegal dumping can have an effect.

The priority is to continue with the work in collaboration with farmers groups, farmers, and communities, to revegetate riparian zones of rivers and streams, restore remaining wetlands, retire low productivity unstable slopes, better manage stock and grazing regimes, effluent spreading. Maintain data gathering and interpretation, seek efficiencies in methods to steady costs.

**5. What are the priority coastal marine issues in the Waikato region, and what do you think WRC needs to do to address them more effectively?**

I think the priority marine issue is fish stocks. What is clear is that the establishment of significant marine reserves supports a more abundant fish resource. What doesn't seem to have been taken on board is that a 'recreational marine reserve' that is still fished, is not a reserve. Another coastal marine issue is the shoreline, stability of, access to, and vulnerability of existing infrastructure to increasing storm events and sea level rise. Some technical and social issues to work through there!

**6. Do you think WRC has a responsibility to have policies to mitigate climate change and manage its impacts? Could you please give some examples?**

I think everybody should have policies, and actions, to mitigate climate change. A fringe benefit of WRC's waterway protection measures is the planting of thousands, if not millions of trees. The gathering of hard scientific data produces information that can help drive policy around mitigation. Operational strategies within the organisation that help mitigate climate change can be an example to other organisations and companies. Electric vehicles for instance, and supporting the growth of a charging station network. On managing the impacts, Civil Defence is the obvious area. Planning needs to be going forward around the likelihood of more intense localised weather events on the one hand, and sea level rise on the other.

**7. What do you see as the priorities for transport in the Waikato region over the next five to ten years, and how could WRC bring about transportation improvements?**

I think a priority for transport in the Waikato region is going to be an effective commuter link between Hamilton and Auckland. Handling the ever increasing freight moved in the 'golden triangle' of Auckland/Tauranga/Hamilton, of which a good portion of the sides lie in the northern part of the Waikato region, will also be a challenge. Urban transport in Hamilton is growing with the city, but is it adequate, and sustainable? The landscape for urban transport may change quite quickly with new technologies, now Uber, one day perhaps driverless cars. I have seen a system of car sharing at a zero carbon eco development in England. Ultrafast Broadband should start to contribute to more work at home or distance working, IRD for instance once had a large office in Te Aroha, and that was before the internet! Why not again? Longer term a new Kaimai tunnel may be needed, that would be better done before the existing one reaches the end of its design life. That should be being investigated now if it isn't already.

**8. How do you think WRC can best assist community groups and individuals who undertake environmental initiatives?**

I think the WRC already well assists these groups, I don't know how it works with individuals. EnviroSchools is a great project. Facilitating the formation of local landcare groups needs to continue, with publicity, technical advice, and relevant local data. Perhaps providing or funding some more training for key volunteers, on simple monitoring, record keeping, pest control, weed identification. I think the trend is for more environmental work to be done by groups and individuals, as this grows so will the pressure on support staff to properly advise and guide this.

**9. What can WRC do to support businesses, schools, families and individuals to make more sustainable choices?**

That's an interesting one. I'd like to see businesses make more sustainable choices around packaging, especially take-away. On a larger scale, perhaps some rates steps for companies excelling in sustainable management, funded by higher levies on others? User pays. But education, good web based resources, publicity, getting buy in from the public.

**10. What have been your most significant contributions to enhancing environmental, social, cultural and/or economic wellbeing in the Waikato region?**

I have farmed a small 'lifestyle/workstyle' block over more than thirty years. For a good part of that time it was spray free, I'm more pragmatic, and older now. It is very productive for its size, and produces mainly beef, and timber and firewood. There are production and amenity trees on it, and some harvesting and site milling has been done in recent years. There are nearly 100 Black Walnut high value timber trees I planted over 30 years ago, Radiata, Eucalypts, Cryptomeria, Lawsoniana, Honey Locust, Chestnuts, Walnuts, a mixture of fruit trees, and native shelter belts. I see that as a contribution to the environment!

I now chair the Waikino Domain Board, and we continue to plant our fenced and spring fed gully there, soon to be revegetating a river zone as well. I volunteer with Habitat Enhancement and Landcare Partnership in Waihi, propagating and doing urban riparian planting, and other projects in the area and out onto the Plains, especially the Hauraki RailTrail. We also do weed control, especially targeting Japanese Walnut in the upper Waihi catchment at present. I am a founding member of a recently formed subgroup, Waitekauri Valley Landcare Group, we are at survey and planning stage, and aim to riparian plant the rest of the river as appropriate over

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time. I have my own small native nursery on my place, and supply seedlings for the Domain planting, the local primary school, myself, and other individuals in the area doing native planting, at nil or nominal charge.

Socially my most significant contributions run back to playgroup days, helping to build our building, then the local primary school, working bees and years as Secretary/Treasurer, more recently on the Waikino Victoria Hall Committee, heavily involved in maintenance. Culturally, I help run 'Art Waikino', and run the Waikino Summer Ceilidh. Each month I run an open mic music session in the local pub, 'Waikino Second Sunday Sessions'. I support the Whare Wananga at Waihi College, and fund an annual memorial scholarship there in memory of my daughter, who drowned in the sea in front of the Surfclub at Waihi Beach in '98, and was transported in the Westpac helicopter to Waikato Hospital. I have a very personal experience with these rescue services that WRC funds.

Economically, I have been either employed or productive most of my life, drilling, building mainly, running a vocational facility, doing civil survey and soils testing. Now providing rental accommodation to happy tenants who never want to leave, allowing me time for community.