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

Perhaps not surprisingly, these questions all raise big issues, and to answer each effectively would require several mini-essays. My responses provide brief overviews and insights; they are far from being in-depth analyses.

Since I am not currently an elected member of WRC, my knowledge of council plans and processes is somewhat less than serving councillors. There is a great deal to learn.

*Please email your responses back to info@sustainablewaikato.org.nz not later than **Monday, September 5th 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?

Water, water and water. There are many challenges, including those we do not yet know about or recognise, but I select three aspects of water because these are functions of regional councils, and require our immediate attention. The current “crisis” in the Hawkes Bay lends weight to the contention that water is, and will be, a matter of considerable debate. Water may seem abundant, but it is a natural resource requiring careful guardianship to ensure availability for both present and future (human) generations, but also for the maintenance of ecosystems, of which humans are but one part. So, this challenge is about water quantity and water allocation; it is about the competing requirements for water use, whether that be a water body such as the Waikato River, or the aquifers. Water is not an infinite resource, as is already becoming apparent. My second water challenge relates to the quality of water. This is a widely recognised problem, but one which is the subject of competing discourses. Since water has been degrading over many generations, it requires an intergenerational response. We have begun this journey, but it will be a long and difficult road. My third water is the coastal environment, especially the coastal marine area. Again, this is a resource (and a particularly sensitive one) that has been taken for granted and (arguably) has been used in an unsustainable manner, without regard for the terrestrial and marine ecosystems which are part of this land-sea interface and the marine environment. I am particularly concerned about the Firth of Thames, and the Hauraki Gulf, which is now the subject of a marine spatial plan (due to be completed). Again, this is a controversial subject, but one which is deserving of our best efforts to bring about change. If I were allowed more challenges, (and an essay-length explication), I would select biodiversity, but this is the subject of question 3.

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

Regional councils, similarly to territorial authorities, should take a sustainable development approach, and have regard to the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of people and communities. This function is required under the LGA 2002, as well as the RMA 1991.

Where sustainable management and ensuing benefits to people and communities can be better provided by working at the regional level, then this is a role for the regional council. However, there is sometimes a tension between regional and territorial local authorities concerning which of them should be involved in economic development. Working together, in ways (which might be) identified in the triennial agreement (and thence the Mayoral Forum, and other fora) should resolve these tensions, and lead to work on developing strategies and implementing economic initiatives. Regional-scale development requires commensurate funding, so again regional leadership is required. In addition, I consider that there must be measurable outcomes – whether this be at regional or local level. I would be concerned to see that jobs are generated as a result of local government facilitation – jobs that contribute to people’s wellbeing, and to communities, while also providing for a sustained and enhanced environment. I note that the threefold mission of WRC addresses healthy environment, strong economy and vibrant communities.

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

It is difficult to identify the greater area of concern – terrestrial or marine, since both are alarming. I will select marine as an example. As one of my “three challenges” (see question 1 above), the marine environment is subject to extreme and competing pressures. Over many millennia, the world has seen the extirpation of numerous species (terrestrial and marine) following human colonisation and settlement. At the same time, the arrival of invasive marine organisms which threaten both New Zealand’s economy and its biodiversity is a growing problem and requires greater diligence by all (and therefore greater knowledge and understanding of the manner of importation and the threat such organisms pose). As with many other issues, regional council has a leadership role, and also a regulatory role. Turning to plants, as another example, the interregional transfer of pest plants requires similar diligence. The climate and environment across New Zealand is not common: indigenous biodiversity requires location/region-specific mechanisms and methods for protection. So, these matters are very difficult areas of work for WRC, requiring considerable resources, while being contentious – and therefore much-debated. Unless we raise awareness (council’s leadership role) we will not make gains. Everyone needs to share responsibility.

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

Freshwater quality is highly variable across the region. A major challenge is the long lead-in times for improvement in water quality. Following modification of practices which contribute to poor water quality, for example nitrogen leaching, the benefits will not accrue for many years. Therefore, it is a difficult concept to grasp and accept; costs and benefits are intergenerational. Understanding the range of factors that contribute to degradation of water quality is challenging in itself. All sectors have

a part to play in this, not just the prime suspects. Again, the Havelock North case, and other recent events, have heightened awareness of the issues of water quality and what we should do about it. Microbes that may cause harm to humans are of course everywhere in the environment (including in and on humans themselves) so some pragmatism (and science) is required. Urban intensification (in an increasingly urbanised world) is also adding to the burden, and so, in my submission, there needs to be greater individual responsibility for the manner in which we all use the natural resources of our (relatively) clean and green environment. Changes to the RMA in 2009 have not assisted an understanding of the contribution of vegetation to urban environments and biodiversity (removal of tree protection controls in District Plans). Council already has developed, or is developing, a number of strategies for addressing some issues. Please also see answers to other questions.

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?

This is linked to questions 1, 3, and 4 above. As an example, the contribution from the Waihou and Piako Rivers to the sedimentation and nutrient load into the Firth of Thames is a highly contentious and emotive issue. There are competing demands from various users of marine space, from aquaculture through to recreation; equally there is a strong conservation voice. Coastal erosion and/or progradation are of concern to many coastal communities (see also question 6). Another headline grabber is the wastewater overflows and associated effects on the Raglan/Whaingaroa Harbour: clearly, a step-change is required in the way wastewater is both produced and managed, and both the territorial and regional council have a role. Returning to the first issue, the Hauraki Gulf Forum, in which the Waikato Regional Council is (or should be) a major party, has led the way to greater understanding of the challenges facing the whole of the Hauraki Gulf (and therefore the CMA). The Forum's role is one of advocacy and facilitation, particularly with its constituent parties; it is the constituent parties, including the Ministers of Conservation, Fisheries (Primary Industries), and Maori Affairs (Maori Development), that implement the integrated and sustainable management requirements. The coastal marine environment does not stand alone, but is significantly affected by activities in the terrestrial environment. It therefore follows that an integrated management approach is required. Somehow, warring factions must be brought together, and a holistic management approach adopted. WRC is well-placed to contribute to this work stream, by using science to inform policy and plan development.

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?

Rather than providing a glib answer citing contributions to emissions, and so on, I am going to say that I am not sure how council policies might "mitigate" climate change. Climate change occurs over long temporal spans, albeit that recent human activities might be fast-paced environmental effects. Climate change is occurring, and has occurred over many millennia. It can be argued that human modification of the environment has contributed to significant changes in the earth, including changing weather patterns and extreme weather events. It may be that we have indeed entered a new age, the Anthropocene. Perhaps the earth is reaching or has reached carrying capacity. Regardless of the relative contributions to climate change (human and other), there is, in my view, strong justification to reduce our environmental or ecological footprint on this earth. Climate change may

also be observed over the shorter duration, and where a direct link can be established between human activity and environmental effect, then policies addressing mitigation measures (or preferably avoidance) might be a regional council function. Perhaps we could start by working smarter, rather than being a slave to habit - we have always worked this way, why should we change? If WRC has policies about sustainable environmental outcomes, this should encompass anthropogenic effects on climate, although I repeat that the temporal and spatial extent of change is complex. How people respond to changing environments (and are enabled in this endeavour) are matters requiring much more consideration. These issues are of great significance. My views are informed by my own recent research on palaeoenvironments in the Pacific.

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?

Transport needs to be broken down into its constituent parts, which might include public transport, freight, or transport generally. In regard to public transport, there is an apparent need for transport between Hamilton and its commuter suburbs (Waikato and Waipa and Matamata-Piako Districts). There is also a need for inter-regional transport to cater for the “commuter suburbs” of Auckland. Since this requires bringing multiple parties together, and working to achieve longer-term goals, many with considerable financial burdens, the regional council has a pivotal role. Central government (unwilling as it may be) must play its part, because the stakes are high, the financial costs great. I am aware that people wish to see passenger rail immediately, but this is unlikely to happen without considerably more pressure brought to bear. Solutions will need to incorporate short-term (small-scale) proposals, although I confess that I am not sure what these might look like.

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

Freely available advice and contestable funds are key approaches. WRC already acts in this area, and indeed assisted me with advice some years ago. I believe that there is a public good component in this, and thus regional council should facilitate and actively encourage those who willingly pursue environmental initiatives, because the benefits accrue to all. WRC has a number of funds, and I support this as a method to promote action within communities. Education, in my view, is important to instituting cultural change whereby people feel a sense of stewardship for their environments.

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

Education is required, preferably with real science and matauranga Maori, and less of the gloss that frequently surrounds sustainability. Carrots are better than sticks (albeit that regulatory controls are a necessary tool). Again, there is no quick solution, as there is often considerable resistance to change, particularly where costs appear to fall on individuals and businesses. Young people often show greater understanding of the benefits of sound environmental management, and so involvement in environmental education should be supported.

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

At an individual level, my contribution to environmental enhancement has been my own riparian revegetation programme. While it is only a tiny blip on the landscape, if I could persuade everyone along the waterway to plant, then the incremental change would gradually result in enhanced water quality, biodiversity and stream ecology. However, there are considerable costs (time and money) and people are not always in a position to do this. My advocacy for the work of the Hauraki Gulf Forum (as a semi-co-governance model) under the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000 is an area where I have actively participated, both as a Forum member, and subsequently as an individual. I have worked in the area of heritage conservation, promoting a landscape approach, and assisting community groups (within the Auckland Region). My expertise in resource management and good decision-making has allowed me to assist individuals and groups (across the two regions) to better understand how to approach what often seems a daunting task, with a myriad of policies and plans. Empowering people does indeed enable participation.

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