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WRC candidate name: *Liam Kedzlie*

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 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?

Increased population growth is already impacting the region and will put further pressure on infrastructure and services on the near to medium future.

Water quality, including rising water temperatures and excessive nitrogen within our waterways, wetlands, and estuaries is an ever increasing concern. The concentration on fresh water quality in our streams will be a huge project going forward and the WRC needs to continue its advocacy for the highest of standards and buy-in from the farming sector and other occupations that present a risk to the environment is best practice is not followed.

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

It has a role in enabling economic development alongside TA's and central government, but not a direct role in funding it. The WRC's role in my view is more in terms of strategic direction in a policy sense providing integrity to the regions balance between economic activity and the environment in which it plays a statutory role in managing resources.

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 WRC are doing a great job in this area in my view – within the funding that they get. I do not buy into the premise they are neglectful, but are sincere in their responsibilities around the bio-diversity and bio-security space. A pest free New Zealand by 2050 is a massive step in the right direction in which the WRC no doubt will play a major role in an operational sense in achieving this objective.

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

The extreme levels of nitrogen in a number of our waterways are a real issue with respect to water quality. The Upper Waikato and Hauraki catchments have significant issues. I strongly advocate for freshwater corridors of mixed native species planting, which as a mitigation

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approach also contribute to the carbon sink and enhance the natural visual amenity of the landscape.

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?

The debate around Finfish farming in the Firth of Thames and the environmental versus economic consequences will no doubt raise its head again soon. Coastal Erosion on the eastern seaboard of the Coromandel is a issue of great concern particularly with the impact of rising sea levels and will make its earliest impact on our estuaries and low lying flood plains that are adjacent to the coastline. I will be interested in the outcomes of the The Marine Spatial Plan – Sea Change that will be worked through in the near future and I am heartened on a positive note by the creation of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park and proposed closure to commercial fishing in the Firth of Thames.

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?

The Commissioner for the Environment warns of substantial issues rising from climate change and the rise of sea levels. My concern is primarily focused on the effect that this would have on my local estuaries and low lying area's around the Coromandel, which will be first impacted. Of course the WRC must have a role in mitigation of any effects.

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?

For the Coromandel we are completely off the radar with respect to the Waikato Regional Transport Plan, which to us seems all about the Waikato Expressway. Our main highway SH25 is heavily used and traffic delays are increasing over the summer months, which creates huge increases in daily traffic loads, particularly with visitors and heavy traffic vehicles to support. The Coromandel people insist on a revised regional transport plan, which reflects their needs.

Locally also there is a call for the Whitianga ferry to be funded for Gold card users, which will assist them in gaining public transport access from the Eastern beaches through to Whitianga town just a 5 minutes ferry ride away and thus not have them driving the 40 minutes to town and the growing traffic and parking problems the Mercury Bay has.

There are also nine old single lane bridges around the Peninsula, which are unsafe, create travel delays particularly in the busy summer months and of elderly construction that also inhibit the water flow beneath them sometimes creating stream blockages through debris and sediment build up

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

Continue the Small Scale Community Initiatives Fund (SSCIF), clean heat initiatives, the great work done with our local Land Care and Stream Care groups.

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Also continue the sponsorship of the Waikato Business and the Environment Awards as a flagship example to encouraging sustainable business practice.

Lead the conversation about recognising that our future competitive advantage economically is our environmental advantage.

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

The Enviroschools initiative is an excellent foundation from which to inform our younger generation about the responsibility of looking after the environment.

Maintain strong links to Iwi and Hapu with respect to the role that Kaitiakitanga plays in the integrity of the environment.

Look to further collaborate with other agencies including the business community and the people of the Waikato through community partnerships that focus on environmental sustainability.

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

I am a recent returnee to New Zealand and the Coromandel in particular after working in policy role in Japan for a number of years. All I can say is that I feel that my knowledge as a former Waikato Law Student who after studying after Stage IV Environmental Law under Barry Barton and Trevor Daya-Wintebottom, provides me with a robust grasp of the significance and impact of the RMA and LGA with respect to being able to provide a balanced and community focused response to the sustainability and conservation issues that lie at the heart of being a Regional Council representative for the Coromandel.