



Email: info@sustainablewaikato.org.nz

Web: www.sustainablewaikato.org.nz

WRC candidate name: *Lois Livingston*

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?

- Getting the first stage of Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora implemented within its ten year milestones and continuing this work within the Hauraki Settlement.
- Regional Development - economic growth through Green Growth Strategies while maintaining and enhancing our biodiversity outcomes.
- Auckland's spread into Waikato - public transport infrastructure including passenger rail services.

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

Yes I do. As a facilitator for the region, we are working at the forefront of Waikato Means Business - an economic development strategy for the Waikato Region. While the Waikato is doing well it is in need of improvement if it is to reach the higher levels of economic growth being achieved in other regions. We are also part of UNISA the Upper North Island Strategic Alliance which deals with cross boundary issues and long term collaboration between the related councils.

The Regional Development Fund - I initiated this some years ago when we were presented with millions of dollars of requests for the various cycle ways around the region and we had no way of considering these. I saw cycle ways as a great Green Growth Strategy for all our districts and especially to promote economic growth in some of our lower economic communities. The Regional Development Fund has a fundamental requirement for any activity applying for money will have a Green Growth bottom line.

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

For this region and the whole of NZ the biggest threat is biosecurity incursions. The Governments discussion document Biosecurity 2025 illustrates the need for all NZers to become of the threats to our primary industries and to our biodiversity through the huge boost in overseas internet purchases and the increased shipping and freight into NZ. Response needs to be not just national but regional and local and we will need to have a relook at our Pest Management Strategy to ensure we have policies and implementation measures in place to deal with this problem at a regional level as incursions such as velvet leaf occur. Coastal incursions are a real concern of this council having 1200 kilometres of coast to manage including a large part of the Hauraki Gulf.

Sustainable Waikato questionnaire to Waikato Regional Council candidates 2016

Our biodiversity is continuing to decline and only by working with other agencies and the community in a collaborative manner is this going to be halted. Our work around Healthy Rivers which includes wetland restoration, retirement of unproductive land back into bush, sediment controls for our stream lakes and rivers will be a really help and as this work is rolled out across the region biodiversity will improve. It is a long term gain which cannot be achieved by the regional council alone but must include all interested agencies and our communities who are doing some great work 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 implementation of Healthy Rivers Wai Ora is a major piece of work never tackled in NZ before and this plan change will be a game changer for the Waikato's management of its water resources and over time will be rolled out across the region. The River Settlement Act introduced a very high bar through the Vision and Strategy for the Waikato and Waipa River catchment and for the first time set up a Co- Governance structure with the 5 river Iwi involved with this catchment. It also involved a collaborative process where a large groups a varied stakeholders have produced the policy and presented it to council rather than council coming up with a draft policy and putting it out for submission. This has worked extremely well and with the Hauraki Settlement on its way we will see a similar strategy for the Waihou and Piako Rivers.

We are also spearheading a series of forums called Let's Talk Water - looking at our water resources and community expectations and requirement over the next 30-50 years.

Waikato Regional Council starting with the Taupo Variation and Variation 6 for Water Allocation is now the leading region in the water debate and we need to stay in that position. We have the ear of government and the opposition parties and our staff have input into many of the government papers.

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?

We have fallen behind in coastal issues over the past few years because of political apathy but this has begun to change and we are putting more resourcing into coastal monitoring which will help the review of the Regional Coastal Plan which will start next year.

One of the great new tools we have developed is a Coastal Inundation tool which shows councils and homeowners the impact of climate change over time. This will help with District Council's coastal planning and be inputted into our Coastal Plan.

Land use controls causing the sedimentation and pollution of our harbours is a constant problem that needs monitoring and rules included in our Coastal Plan. The wonderful work of Whaingaroa Harbourcare is an illustration of what can be achieved by a community with some regional council and other agency funding and we need to roll out these type of programmes across the region.

Waikato Regional Council has assisted the setting up of many coastal care groups working on coastal erosion. We have provided financial and staff support and the results have been outstanding on both the East and West Coast.

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?

ABSOLUTELY. And we are. Drought and floods will intensify. We will be dealing with more extreme events particularly on the Coromandel. So planning is crucial. Sea level rise is going to impact along our coasts and I have already described a Coastal Inundation Tool we have developed to show

the effects of sea level rise. We will be incorporating this work into the review of both the Regional Coastal Plan and the Regional plan which both begin next year.

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?

The Waikato Region understandably has the highest accident rates of anywhere in the country. It also has the most heavy traffic movements. We need to finish the bypass which this government has made its priority. This region needs to get far more proactive in the development of rail not only for freight which gets heavy traffic off the roads but also for passengers. I will be advocating for passenger rail from Hamilton to Auckland to become a priority starting with North Waikato which is lobbying for better public transport to cater for the exponential growth in this area. Auckland has some crucial issues that need to be addressed such as the opening up of Britomart for more trains and this needs the Auckland rail loop to be completed. We need to look at track upgrades and completing the electrification from Te Rapa to Papakura. There is some infrastructure needed with new stations and park and ride facilities. We need a government which can look passed roads and get real about public transport. Spending billions on a road that saves a few minutes in getting through the Waikato only to hit the snarl up in Auckland seems somewhat nonsensical. It is useful for getting heavy traffic off our other roads which hopefully will improve safety.

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

I was part of the council which set up the Environment Initiatives Fund. I also fought for the Natural Heritage Fund which is for large environmental projects. Council also give small grant for pest control assist Community Care Groups with staff support, money and plants. The EIF has proven hugely a successful over the years with hundreds of grants being given out to the community to do core work in protecting our biodiversity and cleaning up our waterways. Maungatautari has been a major recipient of our Natural Heritage Fund as has the purchase of Hope's Bush and the Otorohanga Kiwi House. I would like to see more money made available for these funds but there needs to be a strong political will for this to happen. I will continue to push for this.

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

For many years we have supported EnviroSchools, infact given the initial funds to get it started. We have a designated staff member who works with this programme to ensure our resources are at hand. We have supported the Sustainable Business Network and sponsored business awards that have an environmental focus. We produce fact sheets which are available on our website which give information on pest control, worm farming, peat management, riparian management etc. We hold workshops and field days for our stakeholders to keep them informed on soil management, effluent control and other aspects of land use controls and water quality controls. We could always do more but resources are tight.

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

Sustainable Waikato questionnaire to Waikato Regional Council candidates 2016

I would like to think all my work has been aimed at these outcomes. In particular I was a founding councillor of the Environmental Initiatives Fund and the Natural Heritage Fund which was my idea. I was also the councillor who suggested the Dr.Stella Francis Scholarship which is a joint scholarship with DOC. I have always pushed for the biodiversity box to be ticked in all the work we do. We have far more biodiversity outcomes across all our areas of work than when I first started as a councillor. I have been an integral part over the years in the development of our bus network which is excellent for a city of this size. I am an advocate for passenger rail and hopefully we will see some real progress in this term. I have been an ardent supporter of Enviroschools and setting up agreements with our tertiary organisations. I have been part of the Healthy Rivers Wai Ora Co-Governance Committee and have felt privileged to get to know our river iwi partners and work with them towards a sustainable future for our waterways.