



THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

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Council priorities focused on core areas

New West Coast Council Chair, Peter Haddock, says Council has its work cut out for it as it moves forward and plans for the future.

“The Regional Council plays an incredibly important role for the West Coast and many people may not be aware of the breadth of responsibilities the organisation has.

“We have obligations to both our community as well as Government but our strategic direction and priorities of living in our hazardscape, delivering on our statutory requirements and making best use of our resources remain front of mind.”

Rating District meetings are underway across the region.

“The flood, erosion and land drainage schemes are vital infrastructure across the region. It’s important that we improve the transparency around the rating districts and ensure they have the information required to make decisions for their assets.”

How Rating Districts operate into the future is a key question as the protection of land, assets and infrastructure provides indirect benefits to the wider community.

“As Councillors, we are keen to understand whether multiple separate rating districts is the way forward for the region or if there is a different model that may be more appropriate.”

Delivering on statutory requirements, whether it is in the consenting or compliance space, monitoring and reporting on water quality, delivering planning functions for both resource management, biodiversity, land transport, biosecurity and civil defence and emergency management are also considerable tasks for the organisation.

“We have seen good progress across these areas, in the work undertaken by staff but also by those in the community,” said Chair Haddock. “For example, it has been pleasing to note that for the dairy sector, of the 95% of dairy farms inspected to date this season only four non-compliances have been recorded out of the 278 farms.”

“Submissions on the Proposed Te Tai o Poutini Plan closed in November 2022 with 543 submissions received. This is a Plan that is being developed for the West Coast so having this level of involvement from the community and other stakeholders is really critical for its future success.”

The Local Government Commission charged the Regional Council with preparing the combined district plan for the three West Coast District Councils. This means, that even though this is a plan to be implemented and used by the district councils, the Regional Council is responsible for seeing it through development. This includes its funding.

“Te Tai o Poutini Plan is a funding headache for Council,” said Chair Haddock, “but it is something that we are just required to do. As such, we want to make sure that it delivers what we want it to for the region.”

There are a number of other big challenges ahead of Council this coming year.

“Our work programme comes with a price tag,” said Chair Haddock. “The question is, how do we fund this work so it is affordable to our ratepayers?”

The “user-pays” approach for the services provided, whether these are for rating districts, consent holders or other services that are delivered remain a key component of the funding equation. There are also a number of other activities which are not considered as “user-pays” and will need to be funded by the wider region.

“Unfortunately, it may mean that there are rate increases as we look to the future through the Long-term Plan process.”

Chair Haddock noted the significant work programme ahead of Council for this year.

“We certainly have our work cut out for us; however, I am confident that we are in a good space to deliver for our community as we grow our Council team and build together for the future.”

Council, like many organisations, is still facing issues recruiting key positions. Chair Haddock said that these positions need staff who either live on the Coast or were willing to relocate to the region.

“It’s important that we find the right person and sometimes this can take time. There have been a number of very high-quality appointments in key positions over recent months for our Planning and Science Manager, Operations Manager and most recently our Infrastructure Manager.”

“Our staff are our greatest resource. We have excellent people throughout the entire organisation, from those out in the field, at our front desk and in a myriad of other office-based roles. As Councillors, we are keen to work as a wider team through the Chief Executive and staff for the future of the Council and the betterment of our community.”

And in regards to the Chief Executive recruitment.

“We have received some excellent applications for the Chief Executive role. This is a critical appointment for the Council.”

Recruitment for the role started when incumbent Chief Executive, Heather Mabin, signaled her intention to leave at the inaugural meeting of Council in October 2022.

“The contribution of Ms Mabin to the organisation has been tremendous in very trying times. As Councillors, we have certainly appreciated her willingness to remain with the organisation over the recruitment process and to provide a smooth transition for the organisation.”

“As soon as the appointment has been confirmed we will be very happy to share the details with our community.”

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