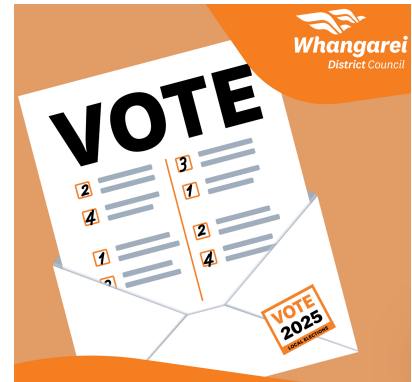


Meet the candidates - an evening hosted by the Whangārei Heads Citizens' Association



Over 100 people braved the weather to attend the Whangārei Heads Citizen's Association event at McLeod's Bay Hall where Susan Crawford invited Mayoral candidates and those standing the Whangārei Heads Ward to answer a variety of questions that had been submitted by residents.

We have attempted to summarise the candidates' responses and have provided links to their profiles on the Whangārei District Council election candidates pages as well as any Facebook or web pages that we could find.

We hope that the information will help you decide how to rank the candidates - remember that voting will be done using the single transferable vote system so it is important that you are able rank the candidates in order of preference - more information on STV here [Single Transferable Vote STV explained](#)

Not all candidates were present and we urge you to attend the next **Meet the Candidates** event which will be hosted by the **Parua Bay Residents and Ratepayers Association at Parua Bay Community Centre on Wednesday, 3 September, 6:30pm - 8:00pm and on Saturday, 6 September, 3:00pm - 4:30pm**

Each candidate was given the opportunity to introduce themselves and then we launched into the questions...

The quick questions:

On fluoridation: If you are a sitting councillor or mayor, did you support the legal action to prevent fluoridation? If you are (re)elected, would you support additional rate payer resources being used to continue legal opposition against fluoridation.

On marine sand mining: Do you support marine sand mining or oppose it, and would you table and/or support a motion sending a strong message to government that the WDC opposes sand mining in Te Akau Bream Bay?

On Maori Wards: What is your position on Maori Wards? Are you for or against? And what is your experience of the value or otherwise, of more diverse representation and inclusion?

On climate change: Do you accept the scientific evidence that we are experiencing significant climate change, with an increased risk of both frequency and severity of storms as well as the sea level rise? And do you accept that human activity, such as burning of fossil fuels, is significantly causative?

The longer questions were focused on infrastructure and specifically on the appalling state of Whangārei Heads Road and the capacity issues at the outdated wastewater system.

Roading Infrastructure: How will you ensure that WDC spending on our local roads is focused on building safety and resilience rather than for it pouring rate payer funds into holes?

Wastewater infrastructure: Storm water inundation along with capacity issues cause frequent discharges of sewerage in the harbour. Tell us how you would mitigate this problem as it stands

AND how you would respond to the urgent need for the system to be upgraded amid all the other issues competing for funds?

Equity and fairness: How do you foresee your leadership and/or participation, will ensure a reasonable balance between equity and fairness in allocation of capital spending on essential infrastructure such as roads and footpaths, as well as access to good quality drinking water, and well maintained and adequate waste water systems, especially given that some of us out here are among the highest rate payers and we receive some of the fewest benefits?

Questions just for local candidates:

Managing conflicting demands: As an active councillor, you're expected to participate in multiple committees, develop a rapid understanding of issues that you may not previously have known much about, and simultaneously be expected by your constituency to be available for discussion on any issue, as well as to support engagement in meaningful consultation. How do you foresee managing these potentially conflicting demands?

Residence, reasons and priorities: Where do you live, why you're standing for this ward and what are your specific priorities for this ward?

Methodology: By what means do you propose to advocate for and communicate with the residents of Whangārei Heads on matters affecting them and the district as they arise?

Final comments from all candidates:

Closing comments: Your last chance to sum up and one last question relating to public submissions - how would you assure early and meaningful consultation when anyone making a submissions has to wade through a nearly impossible volume of material?

We have been putting our candidates on the spot, so this is the last opportunity for a public statement. We're just asking them to sum up very quickly, but in their summing up, we would like them to address one question that we have, and that is assuring early and meaningful consultation, how will you make more accessible, the nearly impossible volume of material, that any active person has to wade through in order to make a submission to council?

Candidate responses...

Mayoral candidates

Vince Cocurullo



Introduction: Current Mayor. Lived in Whangārei all life - lives in house grandfather built. Ten year career as civil engineer then IT business owner for last 25 years. WDC successes under his leadership:

- Northlander Mayoral Forum Chair - working with Kaipara, FNDC and NRC to access central government funding
- Projects starting next year - four lane road, dry dock, port expansion and hospital
- Changed roading contracts to get more efficiencies from Contractors
- Dropped capital expenditure carry over from \$70m to \$35m a year so that more infrastructure projects can be completed

Fluoridation: Did not state his position on this but confirmed that no further action would be taken.

Marine sand mining: Personally is against marine sand mining but did not accept that Council had any role in taking a private company to court (which did not answer the question) The question was restated but no answer to it was given.

Maori Wards: Did not want to answer. Appreciated (and named) one current Maori Ward councillor had helped him understand tikanga from a Maori perspective.

On climate change: Did not answer the question but stated his belief that damage is caused by human interference rather than environmental changes.

Roading: Focus has been on repairing water and sewerage and now, in the next phase, work will begin on the roads. No time frame was given.

Wastewater infrastructure: Reassured everyone that Local Water Done Well had a 30 year plan that would ensure that our wastewater system would be kept functional. Funding had been ring fenced until 2030 to ensure that funds are available. Explained that many of the current issues were due to property owners connecting their storm water outflows into the waste water system. Did not address the issue of capacity for new developments.

Equity and fairness: Works with councillors to make sure each district gets their fair share. WDC 10, 20, 30 year plans work to ensure this.

Closing comments: On submissions - dismissed Ken Couper's idea of a rate payers assembly saying that rate payer groups were already coming into Council. Will be bringing long term planning consultation to public earlier to increase involvement.

Cited Knowledge Hub and Whangārei District Holdings as successes for the Council under his leadership.

Emphasised that as Mayor he ensures that all new councillors are brought up to speed with infrastructure and legislative requirements as soon as possible so that they are in a position to perform their roles as quickly as possible.

"I'm asking you for your vote, because we've set so many things in place, with the central government to get the district going forward, that we need the same leadership to keep the leadership going, keep the district going ahead, keep Northland going ahead"

Ken Couper



Introduction: Fourth generation Northlander - dairy farmer at Waipu. Currently serving second term as Bream Bay Ward Councillor. Active in establishing the Knowledge Hub and Whangārei District Holdings. Described a six point plan:

1. Whangārei District Holdings to provide revenue for WDC
2. Rebuilding relationships with central government (rather than court action) to ensure favourable outcomes for the district
3. Current WDC rates rebate scheme to be boosted for Gold Card holders
4. Rates assistance scheme similar to Queenstown Lakes District Council
5. Independent line by line review of spending and procurement to identify where savings can be made
6. Work with neighbouring councils to identify areas for saving eg HR and payroll

Fluoridation: Did not support the legal action and would not support it in the future.

Marine sand mining: Opposes sand-mining in Bream Bay. Believes that the "Council should make a strong statement as a chance for us to show that what we really think and stand up for our community".

Maori Wards: Supports Maori wards. Seen the benefits that the current Maori Ward councillors have brought.

On climate change: Yes accepts climate change and acknowledged the requirement for Council to plan accordingly.

Roading: Council needs to do better. Repairs should be of a standard that will protect us from the effects of climate change.

Wastewater infrastructure: Believes that the Council response to the wastewater system issues has not been adequate. This should become a performance issue for the teams involved.

Equity and fairness: Assured us that nobody is trying to put one ward ahead of another but there are times when extra funding needs to go to a particular area such as after cyclone damage. Emphasised the role of our ward councillors in bringing local issues to Council and encouraged everyone to participate in long term planning consultation processes.

Closing comments: On submissions - as mayor would like to initiate a rate payers assembly where rate payer groups could come in to Council to discuss issues within all the elected representatives.

Believes experience as a councillor is an essential precursor to becoming mayor - he has served two terms.

"I would say to you, I bring credibility. I will not take the government to court and I am not interested in selfies at every opportunity. I just quietly work with the team to get results and outcomes"

Cited the Knowledge Hub and Whangārei District Holdings as two projects that he has directly influenced and are examples of what he has started to do.

"When I ask for your vote, I know how serious that is and is a responsibility that I take very, very seriously"

Brad Flower  **WDC** 

Introduction: Married for 23 years with three children. Career in infrastructure industry with multiple roles from hands-on to senior management. Extensive experience serving on community boards from sports groups to schools as well as the Ngati Whatua commercial board.

Fluoridation: Not a councillor at this time. Would not vote to continue legal action

Marine sand mining: Opposed to sand mining. "I think that if it's not for the council to represent you and make a submission, then who is it representing?"

Maori Wards: Did not want to answer

On climate change: Yes accepts climate change. Believes that we should be cautious with legislative actions ahead of the major emitters - USA, Russia, China

Roading: Critical of the new procurement model that has been imposed on contractors and does not believe that it will yield a better service. Explained that the geology of our region means that repairs need to be carefully engineered and will be expensive but felt that roads should be fixed once and fixed properly.

Waste water infrastructure: Described the complexity of the situation but stressed that all of the issues were just waiting for an engineering solution. Strongly believed that all infrastructure should be planned and put in place before development was allowed to proceed and stressed the importance of 10, 15, 20 year plans and beyond.

Equity and fairness: A system where rates collected in an area should be spent in that area is isolationist - looking after yourself and not looking after everybody else. Believes that funds should go to wherever there is the greatest need. Agreed with Marie's comments to some extent and stressed the need for our ward representative to be able to negotiate with others.

Closing comments: On submissions - the process is set out in the Government Act and is intended to get all the information to you. Working through the process helps you gather your thoughts and get it down on paper.

Sees a perceived weakness as a strength - has never been in Council but believes that his past experiences have given him all the skill necessary to do the job.

Critical of perceived factions amongst councillors and believes that he could be a unifying voice. "I can manage the processes, I can manage the people and I know what red looks like and black looks like on a balance sheet. So I think that I have honed my skills. I've been wanting to do this job for over 20 plus years because I see the waste in the system and and I have a drive to fix things"

Asked that if you don't think he is your number one choice for mayor that consider him as your second choice.

Fiona Green  **WDC** 

Not Present

Introduction: Married with two children and two grandchildren. Has worked as a registered nurse and business owner. Currently serving as a first term councillor. Declared three priorities if elected:

1. Focus on basics -roading and infrastructure rather than 'vanity projects'
2. Better engagement with rate payers
3. Making rates affordable

Fluoridation: Voted in favour of the legal action. Second question irrelevant as the decision has been made.

Marine sand mining: Opposed to marine sand mining. "I strongly would support a submission"

Maori Wards: Against Maori wards.

On climate change: "to me, the climate's always changing"

Roading: Council needs to do better. In terms of building for road safety "you can't do anything about idiots"

Waste water infrastructure: Council response has not been acceptable "I think council has underspent on infrastructure out here". Council response is also very slow.

Equity and fairness: Not satisfied with the Council process. Things that are in the annual and longer term plans are voted against. "And if you are only one of 14 who vote on that and unless you've got like minded people around you at the table, you're not going to get anything across the line". Believes that some areas have done better than others as a result.

Closing comments: Critical of lack of team work by current councillors- "There are two sides". Believes that people are working in silos and that there needs to be more openness. As mayor she would build teams and make people feel valued.

"So for me, it's about taking your team with you. It's about making them feel valued and taking them with you."

Whangārei Heads Ward Candidates

Introduction: Married with four children who attended Parua Bay School. Business owner and lawyer living on a farm in Whangārei Heads since 2014. Served on board at Parua Bay School. Priorities for Whangārei Heads are roading, water and sewerage. Important to prioritise spending and understand the ramifications of our choices. Will offer:

- Experience to wade through policy documents
- Ability to weigh up information and make decisions
- Drive and ability to focus on an issue
- Ability to ask questions, make connections and see what needs to be done
- Skill to listen, make hard decisions and communicate

Fluoridation: Not a councillor at this time. Would not vote to continue legal action

Marine sand mining: Does not support sand mining and believes Council has a job to advocate against it.

Maori Wards: Is in favour believes Maori have been underrepresented at WDC.

On climate change: Yes to both questions

Roading: The odd geology around Whangārei Heads is a specific issue that needs to be acknowledged and focused on. Repairs will be expensive but the number of cars that have gone off the road demonstrates how much of a safety issue this. Suggested that a simple way of communicating roading issues, such as blocked drains, to WDC could be helpful.

Wastewater infrastructure: Acknowledged that the issue had been looked at but felt that it needed to be a much greater focus for Council - and given a time frame.

Equity and fairness: If all the infrastructure issues that need to be dealt with in Whangārei Heads are dealt with properly then "we'd be getting quite a big chunk of the pie". These are significant issues and they have to be addressed.

Managing conflicting demands: Has had experience managing the equivalent of two full time jobs and knows that she will be accessible and is capable of being across all of the issues as well as being a strong advocate for our community.

Residence, reasons and priorities: Lives near Parua Bay village. Wants to represent our community because she is actively part of it. Priorities would be fixing the roading and sewerage issues. A dream list item (not for priority funding) would be a cycle way from Onerahi to Whangārei Heads.

Methodology: Communicates via Facebook, newspaper advertisements, local cafe meetings, local association meetings, hapu meetings and individual conversations. Stressed the importance of listening to understand all of the issues within the community. Intends to continue community engagement as well as create an email list for people who want agendas prior to Council meetings.

Closing comments: On submissions- Skilled at breaking down large volumes of information and making it accessible so could help with the submissions process. Concerned that one of the issues with the Annual Plan 'consultation' is that it is often presented as a fait accompli rather than inviting meaningful consultation at the start of the process - something that needs to be addressed.

"I care about our community. I think we have really challenging times at the moment, with higher costs, more storms, and everyone hurting from rates. But I think we can face these huge challenges if we have a clear focus"

"I know that I can do this and do it for our community".

Spence Penny  WDC

Did not attend

Jon Twyman  WDC



Introduction: Focus on tackling debt levels for WDC. Would bring a strong work ethic.

Fluoridation: Not a councillor at this time. Would not vote to continue legal action

Marine sand mining: "On the Say No campaign on the beach, I was the little dot on the bottom of the exclamation point so say, yeah, that's my position." * **Voted wittiest answer of the night!**

Maori Wards: Undecided

On climate change: Not a clear answer but seemed to accept that climate is changing and that some action is needed.

Roading: No clear answer "these issues will be very, very important and I represent our voice"

Waste water infrastructure: Believed that no more planning consents should be issued until the sewerage system is sorted out.

Equity and fairness: Need to be mindful of equity when sitting around the Council table.

Managing conflicting demands: Expects the role to be full time and is prepared to work tirelessly.

Residence, reasons and priorities: Lives in Kensington but as a boatie is very in touch with the harbour. "My reason for standing, I think made that reasonably clear. Yeah, if you go hide away from these things, rates are going to keep going up you need to stand up"

Methodology: A Facebook user but believes in listening to what people have to say. Currently stands in Town Basin on a Sunday morning inviting people to engage with him and share their views.

Closing comments: On submissions - disagreed with the premise that making submissions was difficult. He had made several.

Called for accountability "I would say that with the water issue, so many percentage, was it 80%, said we wanted in-house. It's now a combined thing with ring fence funding, that's not listening. We need accountability there"

Introduction: Lives on a farm in Glenbervie where the family has been based for 75 years. Strongly motivated to do something to stop rising rates. Has concerns over Local Waters Done Well and wants assurances that the Whangārei District won't miss out as a result of alliances with other councils. Would like the CBD to be a more vibrant place and is keen to investigate opportunities for youth.

Fluoridation: Not a councillor at this time. Would not vote to continue legal action

Marine sand mining: Against sand mining and believes Council should oppose it

Maori Wards: Did not want to answer

On climate change: Believes climate is changing - no clear view

Roading: Understands that there is a lot of unstable geology (from his work with Northpower) but believes that repairs should be "well thought out and engineered and done properly at the get go"

Waste water infrastructure: He would push for a solution quickly and reiterated concerns over the Local Waters Done Well scenario would mean that the issue would cease to be a priority.

Equity and fairness: Consider priorities and ensure they are well thought through and aligned.

Managing conflicting demands: Is retired so has lots of time. Used to dealing with priorities and doing his homework. Will engage with the community when needed. Will do his best for the community that he serves.

Residence, reasons and priorities: Lives in Glenbervie. Annoyed about many things perceived as wrong with Council, particularly rate increases, felt he should do something about it. Intends to do his best to achieve that.

Methodology: Believes Council does a good job of communication. Does not do Facebook preferring to meet and talk. Would set up links with organisations like Whangārei Heads Citizens Association and would bring contentious issues to the community to get direction.

Closing comments: On submissions - Felt it was a straight forward process but also concerned that submissions were ignored "Really a lot of, I say 80% of the people, those submissions wanted waters to stay in-house, seemed like it was just disregarded and they did their own thing, which was quite interesting"

Can't make promises to fix things when we are only one voice at the table so it's important to be a team player - we can do better as a team.

"I'll hold the council to account. If we make promises we should keep those promises to people"
When you vote "Remember, I'm the Wild one"