

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND 'NEXT GENERATION' INFRASTRUCTURE

Public concern over climate change is now up at 79%, and there's a continuing call for new public thinking about human settlements and the urban environment, rather than the current 'business as usual' model. This is particularly apparent with council long-term plans and projects that have not been reviewed despite Coalition Government policy changes, innovation and new technology plus the ease of access to global experience in the digitally connected world (and regular global gatherings).

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/climate-news/115669338/covering-climate-now-the-climate-crisis-is-a-mainstream-concern>

This year, students and the public marched in a call for more to be done in response to climate change. In June Hamilton City Council 'refused to validate a climate change petition of one thousand signatures because 'it did not meet Standing Order criteria', and in August, again refused to receive the petition (but 'acknowledged' it) and were reminded by staff of their 'initiatives around transport, waste minimisation, biodiversity, procurement and technology'.

'Utter Rubbish' was one headline that moved around social media at a great pace with a popular view that the council is paying lip service. Mayor Andrew King had previously refused to sign up to Local Government New Zealand's Local Government Leaders Climate Change Declaration (2017).

[Hamilton City councillors' climate views 'complete rubbish ...  
https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/hamilton-city-councillors-climate-views-...](https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/hamilton-city-councillors-climate-views-...)

Aug 12, 2019 - Councillors Garry Mallett, James Casson, Leo Tooman and Ryan **Hamilton** voted against a motion for the need for **council** to urgently consider **climate change** issues at a meeting on August 8. ... It was passed by a 9-4 vote.

### And now...

The Coalition Government is setting up a Climate Change Commission and an Infrastructure Commission in response to the Paris Agreement and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and the Zero Carbon Emissions Act is on its way. Transport spending has been re-prioritised with plans to reinvigorate rail over 'roads of national significance' and serious promotion of multi-modal. There is new emphasis on reducing air and water pollution, and discussion on new delivery mechanisms for 'three waters' in response to a looming tsunami of costs arising from the nation's plumbing requirements.

It's five years and two mayors back (as well as three decades after Hamilton City Council's initial policy commitments) since the council's independent Sustainability Panel Report recommended a reconstructed Sustainable Hamilton Strategy and Action Plan in response to climate change (energy, transport, land use, biodiversity, water, and waste). This finally went to the council in 2015, with the CEO to report in 2016 and an annual sustainability stocktake was ordered. And so it goes on and around.

Earlier initiatives such as the city's annual carbon footprint do not rate a mention, nor the regular conversations with developers and experts and interested parties to 'do things differently' in line with global experience of 'next generation' infrastructure.

The University of Waikato, Tainui Group Holdings, and numerous designers and developers have over the years promoted sustainable 'green' design, and the Waikato's two large community trusts have supported initiatives (WEL Energy Trust with undergrounding and energy efficiency and now the UN SD Goals).

Over many years, actions urged on the council include a serious commitment to school transport (prompted every school holidays when congestion drops off dramatically), a re-prioritisation of transport funding away from big roads to a meaningful connected and integrated off-street cycleway and walkway network (using gullies), urban forests and 'green treatment' of polluted stormwater run-off into the Waikato River, incentives for rainwater storage (bladders) and grey water recycling to reduce the wastage of treated potable water from the solo city treatment plant. And 'in situ' sewage treatment with grid connections to reduce both flow and costs to the city's solitary Pukete Water Treatment Plant. It is noted that the council's current water right to discharge into the Waikato River is up for review in 2017.

Peacockes was identified for city expansion in 1974, then brought into the city in 1989. HUGS (Hamilton Urban Growth Strategy) was years in the preparation and signed off in 2008, the Southern Links street network was confirmed by independent planning commissioners in 2014, and after appeals included in the District Plan in 2016. Council's planning time-frames are lengthy and cumbersome, but rapid change can also occur – as with the change of Government in 2017.

It seems there has been no review of the Peacockes Structure Plan, and that the principal reason for the proposed Hamilton Gardens bridge is to carry the sewer pipe (and connect it 15 km north to Pukete along mains already 'at capacity' at storm times).

### **Another story, other options**

After Peacockes was brought into the city in 1989, local developers pointed to huge savings from 'stand-alone' infrastructure systems backed up by best practice experience internationally. (There have been similar warnings of high costs to develop Rotokauri and Ruakura).

Developers generally, supported by expert advice, have been unable to achieve serious consideration of anything but the status quo of centralised 'three waters' servicing, despite evidence of the benefits, efficiency and effectiveness, of alternative systems (Mother Earth, Next Generation, or combinations). There is potentially even greater cost-benefit results today as extreme weather events increase risks to council's single entity centralised services, and there are concerns at poor maintenance and system failure.

All this is relevant in the search for affordable housing.

It is no secret that the roading lobby has been powerful in NZ, nor that we are now seeing the results of 'building big roads and the big traffic will come'. The Transport Agency confirms we have the highest light vehicle ownership in the world. We may love our cars, but the inclusion of a new highway through the Peacocke growth cell calls into question the council's statutory responsibility to promote overall community well-being.

In addition, the prioritising of the eastern connector 'motorway with its proposed bridge across the river may be less of a priority than the long-proposed State Highway 3 (SH3) connection to SH1 in Melville (Kahikatea Drive) and the Airport to Tamahere connection to the new expressway. (with the consequential \$200million savings to city council debt).

Further the shift in Central Government policy away from 'big roads' towards multi-modal transport, and the newly announced proposal to develop a 'fast train' service from Waikato to rapidly reviewed and rethought to align with longer term plans, with the option of park&ride services in the Melville-airport zone. This option also opens up opportunity for connections, economic and employment opportunities south along the Main Trunk through to the King Country in line with the Coalition Governments regional economic development programme.

The group supports robust business cases for fast-tracking Peacockes development with affordable housing included, plus the Hamilton to Auckland high-speed electrified rail initiative, but notes the community's serious concern about the planning process, financial implications and transparency over the current proposals.

## **Recommendations**

- An independent review of the HCC's 2018 10 Year Plan and 2019-2020 review relating to i) infrastructure provision, ii) development contribution calculations, their impact on housing development for future generations, with recommendations for innovation and urban development best practice.
- An independent analysis of 'stand-alone' or self-sufficient 'next generation' infrastructure options taking account of climate change/extreme weather events and in particular growth cell plans in Peacocks, Rotokauri, and Ruakura to determine whether development costs could be reduced and with improved well-being outcomes (refer appendix 2008 HUGs advice, Strategic Risk Analysis, and 2014 Sustainability Panel Report).
- An independent review of the Business Case for both the Peacocks growth cell and the start-up Passenger Rail Service pilot, taking account of the Southern Links staging and new government transport policies advancing high speed rail. (Refer appendix Cabinet approval)