

## TCDC 2020/2021 Annual Plan – submission comments

### Brian Dixon

My family has owned a small block of native forest on the Kuaotunu Hill since the mid-1970s and I first came to the Peninsula when I was 9 years old and been there every summer since then. I now visit as many times a year and for as long as I can and, collectively, our family and a few close friends spend at least half the year in residence.

I am a clinical psychologist and my wife Judy is a nurse/manager and we hope to move permanently to the Peninsula in the next few years if possible.

I have experience in climate change issues, being part of an international network of leading psychologists committed to applying psychology to help address climate problems. I am co-chair of the NZ Psychological Society's Climate Psychology Task Force.

### ***Proposed Increase to Rates***

I believe that Council needs to pare back the rates increase as other councils are doing. **A 10% increase is completely unacceptable and has to be revised. If ANY rates increase is to occur, TCDC will have to consider how it can deliver rates relief for property owners and business operators affected by the COVID19 impacts.**

My view is that with the current COVID 19 pandemic, Council needs to return to the drawing board and establish **what is REALLY essential, what can be deferred and what else is now needed.**

**The TCDC needs to focus on projects that provide better services for the people in the district; projects that provide meaningful work and build those services that will assist the community recovery in a way that maintains the valuable social and environmental features of this special place.**

TCDC needs to take a stronger stance on **protection of the significant natural areas and significant landscapes.** Currently, minerals exploration and prospecting licence applications cover most of the Peninsula and are a direct threat to significant values of our forests and properties. As a ratepayer, I expect the TCDC to oppose such threats rather than inviting or tacitly accepting them.

I also expect better action on the threat posed by **Kauri Dieback** - full and effective partnership with Iwi, DOC and the Waikato Regional Council in implementing best practice protections for our magnificent kauri forests in the Coromandel.

TCDC MUST increase its planning and action around **climate change preparedness**. We have one of the longest and most vulnerable coastal roading infrastructures of any territorial authority in NZ and need to be working with NZ Transport Agency and the regional council to determine how the assets can be protected and improved.

SH25 is prone to major storm events and those are predicted to become more frequent and more severe due to the changing weather patterns as climate change takes effect. The roading network needs to be made more durable and resilient than at present.

### ***2021-2031 Long Term Plan***

The 2021-2031 plans must include the following:

In its annual AND longer term strategy, TCDC needs to take a stronger stance on protection of the significant natural areas and significant landscapes.

**The threat of mining is a major source of worry** for those who live in or have property in the Coromandel district. This is more so for us than any other city or district in the country yet the Council does little or nothing to prevent or remove that threat. I hope this Council will make strong and persistent representation to Wellington to send the message this is not a welcome industry as it is a potentially destructive risk to all other economic activity on the Peninsula and is a threat to the wellbeing of those who live in and love the Coromandel.

I also expect better long-term action on the threat posed by **Kauri Dieback** - full and effective partnership with DOC and the Waikato Regional Council in implementing best practice protections for our magnificent kauri forests in the Coromandel.

**TCDC MUST increase its longer-term planning and action around climate change preparedness**. We have one of the longest and most vulnerable coastal roading infrastructures of any territorial authority in NZ and need to be working with NZ Transport and the regional council to determine how that asset can be protected and enhanced.

## ***Suggestions for increasing revenue now or in the future***

Like other Councils, TCDC will need to look at **increasing borrowing** while interest rates are low in order to finance the major social investment that a recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will require.

**Central government will be offering funding** for some projects that TCDC should embrace (eg for town centres that are more conducive to pedestrian and cycle traffic rather than vehicles).

Rather than increasing rates at this stage, Council might look to more innovative ways of increasing revenue. For example, there would be merit in issuing community development bonds that offer opportunities for those with disposable income to invest in Council projects; and pay-ahead schemes for ratepayers who can pay in advance for rates over the next year or more at the current level; or incentives to pay the whole year's rates early. Maybe citizens could contribute extra for specific council projects in return for rating or fee discounts in the following year - which could benefit tenants as well with vouchers for rubbish bag credits or service/facility use etc as rewards for contributions to kauri dieback management and other programmes.

## ***Proposed increases in Fees and Charges***

While sympathising with the reasons for the increases, these are very significant and Council runs the risk of people dumping waste and expense being transferred to cleaning up abandoned refuse and solid waste from rural areas, which shifts the burden onto general rates rather than the targeted levies. It is suggested that increases be more modest and incremental over time.

## ***General comments***

It is clearer now that the imperative on Councils has shifted to ensure the safety, wellbeing and financial security of their people, ALL of their people. Assumptions made at the time the Annual Plan was being prepared may now longer apply and what seemed a priority two months ago may now be of lesser importance than providing better support systems and services for people in the district.

It would be nonsensical to increase rates at this time, especially by 10%. Other, innovative means of funding need to be found and savings identified in existing budgets.

## **Possible medium to long-term transition projects**

### Infrastructure and environment –

With NZTA, Waikato regional council, DOC

- elevating the SH25 surface where it is prone to erosion and inundation
- protecting our native forest from Kauri dieback, eradication of pests, and improving walkways.
- replanting native species on roadsides and reserves
- improving estuarine and coastal waters (eg re-establishing mangrove growth), increasing wetlands
- enhancing waterways and water courses
- Increasing focus on walkways and cycleways (for which there is govt funding support)

### Climate action

- embarking on collaborative schemes for energy conservation and savings
- providing subsidies and loans for community to implement savings through wind, solar and energy efficiency measures (eg installing insulation, double glazing etc)
- protecting the coastline from erosion and encroachment
- Planting trees
- Raising coastal road levels
- Installing water storage and implementing water conservation measures

## Community Wellbeing and prosperity projects

TCDC should be partnering with Iwi, central government and regional government and appropriate industries to enhance the social environment and opportunities for suitable small businesses and human services. Some thoughts..

- Providing support for social services and intervention
- Applying government support to housing for those needing low-rent alternatives
- Provide rates relief for positive ventures
- Preventing and avoiding destructive ventures (eg minerals extraction) and the threat that poses to community wellbeing
- Preparing for and encouraging NZ internal tourism – better public transport services (road, air and sea) into and around the Peninsula; less expensive activities (eg fishing/sailing charters, guided walks, scenic flights, short tours)
- Provide support for a wide range of events (concerts, festivals, shows, conferences, sports)
- Promoting and supporting communities' special features (eg crafts, local produce, recreational pursuits in centres)