

Council

**Wednesday, 28 June 2006
Commencing at 5.30 pm**

REPORT OF THE MAYOR

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA FOR A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL TO BE HELD IN
THE CIVIC CENTRE, 6 WAIPAREIRA AVENUE, LINCOLN, WAITAKERE CITY,
ON WEDNESDAY, 28 JUNE 2006, COMMENCING AT 5.30 PM.**

PART B - REPORT OF THE MAYOR

THE WISDOM OF CROWDS

In my March Mayoral Report I talked about the serious business of Council being to deliver wise decisions with integrity. I mentioned two issues - Huruheru Creek and the closing of the Te Atatu South Library - where the community felt there was a chance to change the Council's mind and I made the statement that this is where democracy fails.

Since then I've been reading, researching and thinking and I now want to say, via this Mayoral Report, that the time has come for some strategic thinking and debate about how democracy could be better served in Waitakere.

As you know, one of this Council's platforms is Active Democracy. I think we genuinely make a very good job of active democracy or at least we try harder than most Councils regionally and in New Zealand. Our ratepayers are consulted on a myriad of issues but we don't always make the decision they want us to make. And we don't have to explain either. After all, as the saying goes, they elected us to govern and make decisions and if they don't like it there's the ballot box every three years.

You only need to look at the Western Leader's Letter to the Editor column to gauge popular opinion. It's a very interesting fact that the letters to local papers can delineate the attitude or change a community's perception. Without changing the subject, the way that the allies in the Second World War were able to read the fall of the enemy was to consult the local and regional newspapers. It's still true today. If you want to know how Piha, Massey or Laingholm feels, read the small local news magazines.

So what are people saying? That's the important thing to me. They are saying, in my opinion, that they want more involvement. There was once a feeling that local government was local and that central government MPs were more distant and too busy. Therefore results would come because people personally knew the local Councillors and / or the Mayor. In Waitakere politics are still personal. My phone numbers and address are in our newsletters as are all of yours. But as we've grown and become more focused, more busy and yes, more complex as a Council, we have drawn away from the kind of thing that Councillors could do in the days of the boroughs. These are signals which I think I'm starting to read and of course they are magnified when things don't go right. Often it's simply that we miss the beat of good communication.

Admittedly many of the letter writers complain for the sake of it but there are others who write because they are generally concerned about our method of 'heavy-handedness' and criticise us for not listening to their views and comments. Of course, as we know, they have their recourse at the next election but in the meantime they feel strongly disenfranchised, marginalised and yes, disgruntled.

That is no way to feel and to be honest I feel genuinely sorry our decisions cause that kind of reaction. Our proposed move to a capital value rating system and pan tax is a good example. I applauded the maturity of the debate in the Chamber and the attitude of Councillors who listened carefully and with consideration to submitters from both the community and business. The stack of submissions was certainly justifiable evidence there was opinion that needed listening to.



Much of this is against the bigger picture of a changing New Zealand and Waitakere is now a major player in all of this. But of all our near neighbours we are certainly different in our community culture, social and economic outlook. We are as different from North Shore and Rodney as we are from Invercargill. Our people have different expectations and a different reality of life. We are not a City of lifestyle blocks, high rises or big money. We are very much a multi-mix of people, history and hope. And we don't fit the norm (whatever that might be these days).

I have also noticed that sometimes there is a 'she'll be right' attitude with local government politicians. They see the weekly letters but I don't know if they read them and I mean, between the lines that is. To pick up the nuance of their collective is I think what the new business shrinks call The Tipping Point, the place where an attitude reaches a crucial point forcing a change of reality. In politics it's a force that has to be reckoned with and I think we are up to it.

I truly believe each and every member of this Council has the welfare of Waitakere and its future at heart and that we go out of our way to listen to what people think. And while sometimes we might not make the decisions they want us to I do believe we take all views into consideration when deliberating. And that's all well and good but it's not making people feel any better.

And so I have been thinking about what could be done and whether there is another way, a better way, of letting people have a bigger say, a real say, in decision making which at the same time makes them feel truly part of the decision making process as well as empowered.

After all democracy is all about the people. The idea came to me while wandering round on a spare day in Athens. At the National Museum in the centre of town I came upon a display case about the birth of democracy and how it was once delivered in this the City that invented the very process. Let me take you through that process and how I think it could be of real value here in Waitakere 3000 years later.

Democracy, from the Greek words *demos* (people) and *kratos* (rule) was born at the end of the Archaic Period where some Greek Cities overthrew their tyrants and replaced them with this radical new form of government. Unlike modern democracies though only citizens had a say. Women, slaves and men born outside the City were all excluded. The Athenian system was introduced in 506BC by an aristocrat named Cleisthenes. He set up an assembly where every citizen could speak and vote. It met every 10 days on a hill called the Pnyx and debated proposals made by the Council which was made up of 500 citizens - 50 elected from each of the 10 tribes. The tribes took turns running the Council and the daily affairs of the state. The Assembly required 600 citizens for a meeting to take place. If there were too few people police were sent to round up more. Under the democratic system the most important officials were the *stratego*; 10 military commanders elected annually, one from each tribe. Popular *stratego*, like Pericles, my all time favourite Mayor who I quote endlessly and read often, were re-elected many times. Pericles was Mayor of Athens in a very complex time when the war against the feuding states of Greece threatened the very safety of the City. His funeral speech for a friend should be read at every citizenship ceremony and every politician that needs reassurance about doing the right thing should have it under his or her pillow.

The Athenians had an interesting system for getting rid of unpopular politicians. A vote was held once a year, at which any citizen could write down the name of a politician he wished to see banished on a piece of broken pot (*ostrakon*). If more than 600 votes were cast against someone that person would have to leave Athens for 10 years. This procedure was known as *ostracism*, after the pot on which the name was written. And young ones these days think the *Survivor* television concept is new and modern!

Anyway, enough of the past. It's the future I want to concentrate on here. The future of democracy. And it's with this in mind I have been exploring the concept and the pros and cons of referenda.



A referendum is a direct vote in which an entire electorate is asked to either accept or reject a particular proposal. Referenda may be either binding or non-binding. Non-binding referenda are merely consultative or advisory. It is left to the 'government' to interpret the results of a non-binding referendum and it may even choose to ignore them. Binding referenda are just that - binding - and the 'government' must respond accordingly.

A referendum usually offers the electorate only two choices, either to accept or reject a proposal, but this need not necessarily be the case. In Switzerland, for example, multiple choice referenda are common. In 1977 a referendum in Australia to determine a new national anthem was held giving voters four choices.

Of course we have seen referenda closer to home. Just last month Hamilton City residents voted to keep fluoride in their tap water via a referendum and Wanganui District Council has held several covering a number of local issues including whether to put an 'h' in Wanganui and whether the district should abolish rural and urban wards.

By doing so, Wanganui and Mayor Michael Laws have given the power to the people - literally. Laws and his team have initiated Direct Democracy. They have asked the people what they wanted on matters of significance and by ensuring the referenda only proceed after a balanced information campaign outlining the pros and cons of each question they have enabled the district to make clear, informed choices.

Initially the Wanganui Council considered the referenda non-binding but now Council considers itself bound by the voting. In 2005 the Wanganui Council initiated its first referendum, with each person listed on the Wanganui electoral roll given the chance to prioritise three projects out of 14 capital funding proposals. The Splash Centre extension came in first position followed by the Central City Waterfront Development and footpath upgrades. As a result the Council changed its capital project priorities and voted \$2.5 million to the Splash Centre extension, \$600,000 to the riverfront development and an additional \$120,000 (annually) to footpaths.

Laws hailed the 54 percent voting response a stunning success, giving a clear indication the Wanganui people wanted to have a say in how their hard earned ratepayer dollars were spent. You can understand his jubilation when you consider only 27 percent of eligible electors voted in the Waitakere ward by-election and just over 35 percent, in the 2004 Council election.

To say the media coverage of Wanganui's actions has been positive is an understatement. One reporter said New Zealanders could only hope other politicians would follow Wanganui's lead and that at the next local body elections in 2007 we would see other teams of visionary Councillors elected on the basis of introducing binding referenda at the local body level. He also commented that while Wanganui District Council had instigated the first use of Direct Democracy in New Zealand it was important to remind the reader 190 million people in Switzerland, Italy, Liechtenstein and 23 states in the USA have been using Direct Democracy very effectively as a check on central and local government, in some cases for more than 100 years. "The real surprise is that it has taken so long for Direct Democracy to take root here in Godzone," he finished.

The National Business Review was equally complimentary saying a revolution was stirring in Wanganui, a district leading the way in local government reform and a revolution that should be felt throughout local government. "Mayor Michael Laws is changing the way a city is run," it said. "The use of referenda is a major innovation."

Laws himself was personally pleased with the result of the Wanganui spelling referendum. He said Wanganui people had proven they were a passionate, constructive and deliberative community. "I said I would give the people of Wanganui the power and they have proven they want that power."



So let's look at the pros and cons of referenda.

Advocates see them as a way of giving people the right to make important decisions more often than just every three years. They say the voters rather than the politicians are ultimately responsible for the wellbeing of our society and to survive as a healthy collective we really must evolve and develop our collective political voice into one much more sophisticated than simply voting for a political party or individual once every three years.

Steve Baron founded the Better Democracy movement in New Zealand in 2003 initially under the banner of Voters Voice. The reason for the formation was to put pressure on politicians for change and to raise the awareness of binding citizen referenda as a political tool. He says there is an underlying feeling among New Zealanders that real democracy has been and is being threatened by past and present governments and that many people feel they have lost control of the politicians they elected. While many of these comments relate to central government I think the messages are the same for local government. Advocates also argue certain decisions are best taken out of the hands of political elites and determined directly by the people.

On the other hand there are the opponents who argue representative democracy is superior to direct democracy. Representative democracy is a system in which elected officials are the exercisers of independent judgement rather than merely delegates bound to robotically carry out the wishes of voters. Some opponents insist referenda is used by politicians as a way of abrogating responsibility in the taking of difficult and controversial decisions.

It is also argued voters in a referendum may be driven by whims rather than careful deliberation or that they may not be sufficiently well informed to take decisions on complicated or technical issues. Voters might also be swayed by strong personalities or the adverse influence of spin or expensive public relations campaigns.

Some people are opposed simply because 20th Century dictators gave it a whirl as a way of waging war and history is full of dictatorships manipulating political whim to destroy and corrupt the system. You will be able to Google up a hundred. But let's be realistic. We're not talking about trickery here, we're talking about a real and tangible delivery that people feel empowers them and New Zealand's advocates, long before Laws got in on the act, include well respected politicians like the late David Lange, Michael Joseph Savage and more recently Winston Peters.

Others think the populous at large simply isn't capable of making the right decisions. Others, mainly politicians, worry that if we had to go to the public every time we wanted to get something major done there'd be no such thing as Civil Unions or Prostitution Reform. (Not a lot of the former but too much of the other in my opinion.) But those opposed to social engineering of any kind would say that's definitely a good thing.

As you can see there are valid arguments on both sides of the debate and I am sure you will agree with me that, in itself, makes it very difficult to tick the yay or nay box! But my search for answers wasn't over and it was by coincidence I heard about a book by *The New Yorker* columnist James Surowiecki called *The Wisdom of Crowds - Why the many are smarter than the few*.

Surowiecki begins his book by relating a story about British scientist Francis Galton who in 1906 attended a country fair. Galton had won renown - and notoriety - for his work on statistics and the science of heredity. He was a man obsessed with the measurement of physical and mental qualities and breeding. The gene pool mattered to Galton because he believed only a very few people had the characteristics necessary to keep societies healthy.

At the fair Galton, who came across a weight-judging competition of a fat ox, had a breakthrough experience and one that would change for ever the attitude of research and crowd psychology. People were lining up to place wagers on what the weight of the ox would be after it had been slaughtered and dressed. About 800 people tried their luck. They were a diverse lot and while there were some butchers and farmers who presumably had a level of expertise at judging the weight of livestock, many had no insider knowledge of cattle.



Galton was interested in figuring out what the 'average voter' was capable of because he wanted to prove that the average voter was capable of very little. So he turned the competition into an impromptu experiment. When the contest was over and the prizes awarded, Galton borrowed the tickets from the organisers and ran a series of statistical tests on them. Galton arranged the guesses (787) in order from highest to lowest and graphed them to see if they would form a bell curve. Then, among other things, he added all the contestants' estimates and calculated the mean of the group's guesses. That number represented, you could say, the collective wisdom of the crowd and if the crowd was a single person, that was how much it would have guessed the ox weighed. Galton undoubtedly thought the average guess of the group would be way off the mark because after all, mix a few very smart people with some mediocre people and a lot of dumb people and it seems likely you'd end up with a dumb answer.

But Galton was wrong. The crowd guessed the ox would weigh 1197 pounds after it had been slaughtered and dressed. After it had been slaughtered and dressed the ox weighed 1198 pounds. In other words, the crowd's judgement was essentially perfect.

Galton wrote later: "The result seems more creditable to the trustworthiness of a democratic judgement than might have been expected." That was, to say the least, an understatement says Surowiecki who then expresses the simple, but powerful, truth that is at the heart of his book - under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent and are often smarter than the smartest people in them.

Obviously I can't review in detail the whole book here but you should understand that crowds at test matches, rallies etc are capable of getting it right and so are the voters at the polls.

Surowiecki's last chapter *Democracy: Dreams of the Common Good* talks about deliberative polling and deliberative democracy and poses the question 'what do voters think democracy is for?'

He then goes on to say politicians want, above all, to be re-elected and therefore vote not in the way that they think is best for the electorate but for what they think has the best chance of winning over the voters; pork-barrel politics and paying special attention to the interests of powerful lobbies.

It seems strange then to think that the way to do politics well is to distance yourself as much as possible from citizens' everyday lives. In the same way a healthy market needs the constant flow of localised information that it gets from prices, a healthy democracy needs the constant flow of information it gets from people's votes. *Wisdom of Crowds* is at least thought provoking, at best a blueprint for a dramatic change to democracy.

While researching referenda I also investigated another high quality method for engaging the public in the discussion of public policy issues - Citizens' Jury. The Citizens' Jury process is a comprehensive tool that allows decision-makers and the public to hear thoughtful citizen input. The great advantage of the Citizens' Jury process, so they say, is that it yields input from a group that is both informed about an issue and a microcosm of the public.

In a Citizens' Jury a randomly selected and demographically representative panel of citizens meets for four or five days to carefully examine an issue of public significance. The jury of citizens, usually consisting of 18 to 24 individuals, serves as a microcosm of the public. Jurors are paid for their time and they hear from a variety of expert witnesses and are able to deliberate together on the issue. On the final day of their moderated hearings, the members of the Citizens' Jury present their recommendations to decision-makers and the public.



To be a bit more specific, the members of the jury pool are randomly selected through scientific polling techniques. Jurors are carefully selected to be representative of the public at large. No other process takes such care to accurately reflect the public. Witnesses provide information to the jury on the key aspects of the issue and present a range of perspectives and opinions. The jury engages the witnesses in a dialogue to ensure all questions are answered. Witness testimony is carefully balanced to ensure fair treatment to all sides of the issue. The jury deliberates in a variety of formats and is given sufficient time to ensure all of the jurors' opinions are considered.

After final deliberations the jury issues its findings and recommendations in a public forum. The recommendations appear in language the jurors themselves develop and approve. At the conclusion of the project the jurors are asked to complete an evaluation. This serves to assure the general public that the process was unbiased. This is important if the public and decision-makers are to trust and respect the recommendations and outcome of the jury. The planning and preparation for a Citizens' Jury project usually takes three to four months and the ultimate end of the process is a well informed decision that takes into account all of the available information and the recommendations of the jury.

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I have attached at M1 a document developed by the International Association for Public Participation. It clearly shows the goals, promises and techniques involved with public consultation and the increasing level of public impact. Citizens' Juries are identified as a technique to ensure not just public participation but public empowerment.

So, where to from here?

Waitakere has long been a ground breaker in terms of strategic and outside the square thinking. We were this country's first eco city and we are certainly leading the way in terms of partnerships with Maori and in many other initiatives. Waitakere residents are intelligent and very capable of making informed decisions. Are we ready and willing for Direct Democracy? I think we just might be. Certainly the way is clear in terms of the Local Government Act 2002 and we are only limited by a need to have a credible process that is seen to be fair.

And so I would like to suggest Waitakere considers conducting referenda or going through the Citizens' Jury process on matters of significant public interest. I am not indicating it's a simple process - it isn't. But I am saying the time is right. My personal feeling is that the people of Waitakere should take a more active role in three major projects a year. For example, over the past couple of years we could have canvassed more public opinion and consulted more widely on our Whenuapai commercial airport proposal or the use of the People's Park and its future. And maybe we could have consulted at a deeper level on capital value before we announced we were looking at it as an option.

Those are my thoughts and as for the process, if Wanganui can do it there is a working system already in place. It's not reinventing the wheel but it is empowering and it could very well be worth exploring.

Recommendation: That the Chief Executive Officer report back to Council on the potential benefits to decision making from referenda, Citizens' Juries and any other innovative public participation mechanisms.



AROUND THE WORLD IN 30 DAYS

London

My trip last month was a long awaited and much planned one that would take me to London as part of the official party from New Zealand for the Chelsea Flower Show, the epitome of gardens and gardening. The centre piece of this year's exhibition held from 23 to 27 May was a New Zealand garden designed by Xanthe White and inspired by the coastal rainforests of our own west coast. The garden show is sold out by February with admission strictly by ticket only and policed in an extraordinary show of security. But that's the way it is if you are going to have the British peerage, the Royals and Jamie Oliver all visiting on the same day. The garden, suitably sent off from Waitakere blessed and enhanced by a team of great landscapers and designers, was truly amazing and very much a Waitakere show - from the look of the garden to the people involved. Sacha Nunn from Piha, gardeners from Oratia, landscapers from Rodney. A sculpture by Virginia King enhanced the garden's beauty magnificently.

I was given the honour of being present at the blessing in London on the Monday morning and attending the garden show each day with Minister of Police Annette King, New Zealand High Commissioner in London Jonathan Hunt, and other senior Tourism Auckland and Tourism New Zealand representatives. Without flowers, just bush and black sand and sculpture, the entry was a real stand out and won a Silver Medal but the Aussies, who had weathered their fragile plants in Spain and needed to wrap them each night in sacking, had a truly fantastic entry and took out the Gold. Queen Liz came and liked our stand as did Jamie Oliver who I toured around the site. He has been to New Zealand and enjoyed the Kiwi thing and the Ponsonby Pies!

It was well worth going for this event. I worked on the stand each day handing our New Zealand brochures and just enjoying the sheer madness of it and the pretentiousness of the English garden set. It was a very positive and stunning event for Waitakere and tourism. I also gave numerous interviews with media from both New Zealand and the UK including TVNZ and the BBC. They were very well received.

On the Thursday evening I hosted a function at New Zealand House in the penthouse, a room with a dazzling view over the whole of London. New Zealand House is one of those iconic structures every New Zealander who goes to London knows and loves. It's looking a little tired these days but the room we were in has an amazing balcony and is quite stunning. Many of those who attended the function organised by KEA (Kiwi Ex-Pats Association) are now thinking of coming home and so we were on the hunt for new talent, not only to work at the Council but also in this City, and I think we made an enormous impact. The function was co-hosted by Jonathan who made a very supportive speech about Waitakere and there was an array of important guests including Governor-General designate Anand Satyanand, former Privacy Commissioner Bruce Slane and President of the New Zealand Police Association Greg O'Connor.

M2-M3 I have attached at pages M2 to M3 a letter from KEA thanking us for the Chelsea Flower Show entry and the function which covered the exciting changes happening in New Zealand and an invitation to come here. John Wadsworth from Enterprise Waitakere answered the questions on employment opportunities and already I understand we have around 10 top flight entrepreneurs wanting to return to New Zealand and hopefully Waitakere.

A number of meetings were held including one with the film sector specialist for Investment New Zealand in London, Jacqueline Bennett. The feedback is that Waitakere is gaining a growing and glowing reputation as a forward thinking and innovative City in terms of its attraction of investment into the city.



Greece

Before touching down in London I took a side trip to Greece to track down artist, sculptor and former Titirangi resident David Kennedy who has been living in Seendouri on the island of Aegina for the past 30 years. I have been on the hunt for Kennedy's work around Titirangi and New Zealand for the past five years. It is amazing and beautiful - bronzes, work in copper, steel, brass and both oil and watercolour art. Kennedy, who I give the title of genius without reservation, was a great loss to New Zealand. Kennedy had a foundry that he built at the back of his Titirangi house on Pataroa Road while he worked at the Herald in the illustrations department. A friend of Colin McCahon and all the fringe artists of the time, he was delighted to see me and host me while I was there. I took the opportunity to interview Kennedy, the first time I've worked with a hand held digital recorder, and over the four days I stayed on the island with him I got some great footage which I will endeavour to cut into a continual DVD. I will compile his work, in various collectors' houses around the country, for an exhibition probably April 2007 so I have time to get it all together. He is coming up to 80 and lives with his third wife Maya. The house is just full of sculpture and art including some huge sound and music machines which he would like to donate to Waitakere City but God knows how we would get them packed and shipped here! The art is very good and contemporary, particularly his big bronze pieces. He has been sculpting the goat in a very surreal way and the famous Ponsonby restaurant "The Bronze Goat" was named after his best known piece. He is continually fascinated by the shape and beauty of this animal.

Ireland

Our sister city in Ireland, Galway, was opening its new Civic Square and invited us accordingly. It was a great opportunity to talk about the future of the relationship between Waitakere and this medieval town. Galway has taken 20 years to bring the Civic Square project to fruition at a cost of (NZ) \$19 million. In true Irish fashion they opened the square with a grand parade, bagpipes and drums and that's why I was asked to take my rather over the top Mayoral Robes and Chains. Every Councillor in Galway wears red robes so it looked like a parade of university academics really. I enjoyed the company of His Worship the Mayor of Galway Brian Walsh pictured below.





Mayors are elected from the Council and the majority follows the political party that happens to have captured the council. It's a disappointment really that Britain and Ireland are so badly served by a system which gives good people with vision and ability a mere 12 months to achieve their goals. This Mayor will go places as did the previous two - to the State Parliament and who knows, maybe the Presidency of Ireland.

The Mayor invited me to attend a State Dinner at Dublin Castle with him, a very formal occasion and one which demanded the wearing of the Mayoral Chains of Waitakere to match the rather glorious over gilded version of Galway's 300 year old masterpiece. At least he didn't have to bring the massive mace that precedes the Mayor on official occasions, made by a Galway silversmith in 1720.

We did look the part, climbing the grand staircase in chains and black tuxedos and getting duly announced to the surprise of New Zealand's Governor General Dame Silvia Cartwright and her husband who was as surprised to see me as I was to see her. The dinner was to honour her State Visit to Ireland. She spoke well and acknowledged my presence with grace and good humour. She clearly likes Waitakere. She was accompanied by Jonathan Hunt and we were invited to meet her and the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, in the John Connelly room of the castle.

The Irish visit meant we came away with an agreement to swap staff over the years and to bring Irish poets, writers, musicians and artists to our festivals using the sponsorship available through the Irish Fund and the Sister City funding from Galway. I think it will benefit us greatly to have this remarkable and worthwhile association.

China

I returned to New Zealand via China and our sister city Ningbo who had invited us to take part in the 8th Investment and Trade Symposium held in a massive complex on the outskirts of the city. Each pavilion was at least three times the size of the Waitakere Trusts Stadium and had more than a million visitors through in just two days. This was a truly serious trade fair and the hosts had arranged for a double row of displays for all of the Ningbo Sister Cities - Waitakere and other cities in the UK, Germany and South America.

I led a delegation of 17 Waitakere businesses around education, importing, boat building and tourism to the expo and our stand was very popular. If the job was to go fishing then we certainly caught some big fish. I think the problem is always how do you land the fish. They are very keen to do massive joint ventures and our boat building people realised the task of just working with them will need the citing of an office there but the rewards will be enormous.

The delegation achieved an awesome response, as did our stand, and I have included a picture here to give you an idea of just how swamped we were by media and exhibition visitors which never let up.





M4-M5 Nor did the functions I was expected to attend and be part of let up. China demands the best of you and so speeches were continually being delivered. I include one at pages M4 to M5 which included the opening Maori greeting they find so interesting and supportive of their own culture. All speeches were translated from the podium and there was a lot of local media pick up.

A programme of proactive follow-up is planned including a commitment by the Ningbo Education Bureau to send 10 high school principals to visit Waitakere with a view to establishing sister schools. We learned a number of things from this first trade mission that will be incorporated into the next visit and a survey of the participants is currently being carried out to establish how successful the trip was for them. Anecdotal evidence indicates the trip was a very good starting point into China and a focal point to begin lasting relationships, particularly for the export education sector.

M6 I have attached at page M6 a copy of a letter we took to Ningbo from the Minister of Trade, the Hon Phil Goff. It clearly shows just how important this visit was in a New Zealand context.

Ningbo, soon to be linked by the gigantic 38 kilometre link bridge to Shanghai, will be one of the great cities of the 21st century because I think the century will belong to China and the progress is staggering. Not since the Roman Empire has a country embarked on such massive building of roads and Cities. The huge bridge between - the longest in the world - was only hoardings last year and now they are a quarter of the way out into the China Sea. They will open it with a marathon in time for the Olympics and we still can't get double tracking finished out here to the west!

I think the key outcome of the London and Ningbo visits was a strong connection and heightened awareness of the proactivity of this City and I am sure this will attract more support and attention from both Embassy and New Zealand Trade and Enterprise staff in the future.

Definitely well worth the effort and I am pleased to report the Chinese are human. They can quadruple their Gross Domestic Product in 17 years, they can stuff the malls of America with their mass produced goods and they can build the Three Gorges Dam but they still cannot manage the traffic. Health warning: Do not cross the street in China on a green light. Read again to get this instruction right. Wait for the light to become red and then cross. Why? Let me explain. You stand at a kerb, patiently, obediently waiting for permission from the lights to cross. Eventually green comes up. At precisely that very moment every driver in the vicinity, including some at right angles to you, steps on the accelerator and turns their vehicles in your direction. It is not a matter of a straggler bus or a speeding car beating the turning lights. Traffic in China is completely indifferent to traffic management. By crossing the street on a red light you are at least being careful and you know what you are getting into. Hesitation comes naturally to your tense mind and you can take suitable physical precautions. Green makes you careless, with attendant consequences.

WAITAKERE CITY LONG RANGE OUTLOOK

With winter very firmly upon us and a few important events coming up on the calendar I asked our very own weather predictor Ken Ring of Titirangi to give us the low down on what we can expect over the next few months.

By Ken Ring
www.predictweather.com

July to September - Summary

July to September will be wet months but with warmer temperatures. The wettest will be August. There will be a cold snap each month, but not lasting for more than a few days each time. You could say there will be more cloud than sun over the outlook period.



Heavy rains will come in the last week of July, the first and last weeks of August and the first week of September.

Cold snaps will be at or near 13 June, also around mid July, 23-26 August and 5-8 September. Some places may get a frost in July - unusual in Waitakere City.

And extended dry periods may be only between 17-21 July and 14-18 August.

July to September - The Detail

July - average rain, plenty of overcast skies, some heavy falls in the last week. There'll only be about six sunny days and so we probably won't go more than five days before getting more rain. Warmer than average. Around 19-20 will be the coldest days of winter.

August - a wetter month than normal, again with only about five or six sunny days (1-2 and 14-17). Heaviest falls will come in both the first week and between 19-23. Again a warmer but cloudier than normal month. At least the frost potential will have gone for the winter. Also, some days this August could be unpleasantly windy.

September - drier than August but will also be remembered as month with lots of wet days, although average rainfall in total. Rain or showers will come about every third day. The month will start windy with heavy falls in the first week and colder temperatures. because there'll be some very cool early mornings it will feel like a resurgence of winter, but rising spring temperatures will take over after the first week. By the last week of September temperatures will be in the early 20s. But again a month with more than average cloud.

People's Parade Day (to celebrate the opening of Waitakere Centre) on 2 September looks like it's going to be a mainly dry and mild with some sun. It could be breezy and coolish at first, but daytime temperatures should reach around 17degC by afternoon. However because there is rain forecast for the days on either side, this could mean an odd lingering or developing shower, either around dawn or late evening.

Breakdown:

JULY
Warmer days around 2, 10 and 21.
The sunniest period 18-21.
The first half of the month wet followed by a 4-day sunny spell commencing 17.
About 22 overcast skies set in again, heavy falls in the last week.
Rain days: 3-7, 10-16, 21-23, 26-28, 31.
Drier periods: 17-20, 24, 29-30.

AUGUST
Windy days; 8, 11-13, 18-19, 25 and 29.
Warmer days could be around 18 and 31.
The sunniest time could be 2.
Apart from a dry two days starting the month, the first half of the month 3-13 may be rainy, also from 18-31.
Rain days: 3-13, 18-31.
Drier periods: 1-2, 14-17.



SEPTEMBER
Rain days: 1, 3-5, 9-10, 12, 15-19, 21, 25, 28-30.
Drier periods: 2, 7-8, 10-11, 13-14, 20, 22-24, 26-27.

MILESTONES

Waitakere Business Awards

While I was unfortunately unable to attend the Waitakere Business Awards the feedback I have received was all positive and I wanted to extend my thanks to the organisers, Enterprise Waitakere and all those finalists and winners especially supreme award winner Airpro and Alloy Yachts' Tony Hambrook, a long time builder of magnificent craft and one of the Cities finest employers, who was inducted in the Business Hall of Fame.

Leaving

After eight years, former Councillor and principal Owen Hoskin is leaving Henderson High School. Owen has been totally dedicated to the school and his pupils and I am sure everyone will be sorry to see him go although we do appreciate the need to chase a new challenge and so we congratulate him on his new job as Chief Executive of Taylor's College. We welcome Henderson High's new principal Joy Eaton who was associate principal at Waitakere College. I invited Owen to attend this June Council meeting and join us for dinner.

Congratulations # 1

It is with great pleasure I congratulated on behalf of the Council our local Queens' Birthday Honours recipients:

Air Marshal Bruce Ferguson, formerly of Whenuapai, Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (DCNZM) for services to the New Zealand Defence Force.

Andrew Adamson, Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to film.

Ray Henwood, Piha, Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) for services to film and theatre.

Professor Lynnette Ferguson, Titirangi, Companion of the Queen's Service Order (QSO) for public services.

Malcolm Hahn, Whenuapai, Brian Henaghan, Glendene and Kay Ingley, Te Atatu Peninsula, Queen's Service Medal (QSM) for community service.

I wrote on behalf of the Council to each recipient offering our sincere congratulations.

Congratulations # 2

It was with real pleasure I read in the latest Cuisine Magazine the Bethells Food Store and Café was in the top 20 of its Top 100 food and beverage places. "When you're done with the walking, the gazing, the surfing or whatever else you've gone to the wild west coast of Auckland for, you want a decent bite to eat," the magazine says. "Something with flavour and body. Something to defy the fact that the idea of takeaway food is almost invariably better than the reality. You want a West Coast Burger from the caravan at Bethells Beach. Made with tomatoes and lettuce grown locally, home-made patties and mayo, they are world famous in West Auckland for very good reason". Praise doesn't get much better than that so congratulations to Jim and Anna Wheeler.



Congratulations # 3

To Babich wines who are celebrating 90 years making fine table wines. Recent publicity has acknowledged the huge respect the industry feels for this great local family business. So congratulations to the family, in particular winemaker Joe Babich and marketing manager Peter who are both long and dear friends of the City of Waitakere.

In this the 90th year of the Babich business I am also very pleased to announce here that Babich wines will be proudly served at our Grand Laureate Dinner on Friday, September 1 which is being held as part of our new Civic Centre opening celebrations. We asked Joe and Peter for their sponsorship in this regard and they willingly agreed which is absolutely fantastic. And on the subject of sponsorship I can report our efforts are going well. I will give you all a full report on that and the opening celebrations in general shortly.

Congratulations # 4

Local photographer and former Western Leader snapper Chris Hoult has secured a publisher for a book of colour photographs of Waitakere. The book, to be published in June next year, will be about 120 pages with the photos accompanied by essay type captions, written by Chris. The book will be launched at Lopdell House and I look forward to the event and the finished product. Congratulations Chris, we always like it when our wonderful City is immortalised in print.

Congratulations # 5

To the Titirangi Residents and Ratepayers Association which has just held another successful annual meeting and re-elected Greg Presland as President, Marguerite Laing as Secretary and Paul Wilton as Treasurer. Congratulations also to the other newly elected members. This active and very positive environmental group, although while not always in agreement with the Council, has been visionary. I am pleased the members have continued to elect such high calibre people to the committee and I wish them well for the future.

A Dog's Tale

M7

Several months ago I received a letter from a New Lynn resident by the name of Skeeta. Skeeta was a cross breed dog whose owners were having trouble with registration because they couldn't provide conclusive evidence of Skeeta's parentage. As you can imagine Skeeta was unhappy and wrote to me for help. I of course replied to Skeeta and by all accounts things were eventually sorted out. However I was sad to learn earlier this month Skeeta had died. I have attached at page M7 a poem letter from his owners which I am sure you will enjoy as much as I did. May Skeeta rest in peace and be reunited with his parents, if he can find them!

Question of the Month

Whatever happened to bird flu?

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Report of the Mayor be received.
2. That the Chief Executive Officer report back to Council on the potential benefits to decision making from referenda, Citizens' Juries and any other innovative public participation mechanisms.

RA Harvey, QSO, JP
MAYOR OF WAITAKERE CITY