

## Drew Cowley

### Q1. Contact Details

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>Name</b>                                                        | Drew Cowley                            |
| <b>What Council are you standing for?</b>                          | Western Bay of plenty District Council |
| <b>What position(s) are you standing for on the above Council?</b> | Councillor - Kaimai Ward               |

### Q2. What drives you to run as a candidate in the local body elections? What do you hope to achieve?

Council complacency has contributed to higher rates, reduced community engagement, and increased self-promotion among councillors who have held their positions for over 15 years. Many have become too comfortable in their positions and forgotten whom they are elected to serve, while raising rates to cover what I can only call their follies.

The council often delegates decisions to commissioners, then expresses dissatisfaction with the outcomes.

Transparency has diminished to the point where it is nearly absent.

Unregulated development has converted productive land to less valuable uses, shifting focus from the core strengths of the WBOP. Our region and Tauranga rely on farming, horticulture, and natural environments that support tourism.

I am running to protect our region and ensure community voices guide council decisions, addressing these concerns.

### Q3. How will you support the kiwifruit industry?

Labour shortages remain a challenge for the industry. The council should support technology and automation, focusing on removing obstacles within its control and avoiding unnecessary barriers.

Water management is a significant concern for the community, with access to safe and reliable potable water being crucial.

In rural areas, infrastructure is a challenge for the entire community and not just for horticulture. The council must ensure these communities receive appropriate funding to support their local economies. This includes ensuring that rural rates, such as the rural works charge and the roading fund, are spent locally, as well as a fair share of the overall roading rate.

The rural sector in the WBOP contributes millions each year and should not be overlooked.

We should collaborate with the BOPRC, which plays a key role in the Port of Tauranga, to ensure biosecurity plans are robust and prepared for future threats.

### Q4. What will you do to support the development of seasonal worker housing, especially in rural areas?

Councils are developing Spatial Plans, with Te Puke's completed. We should identify on-site accommodation opportunities and recommend district plan amendments to permit these in rural zones. Streamline the consent process by proposing concrete steps to simplify it.

As farming and horticulture drive the WBOP economy, it is essential to develop collaborative solutions that support these sectors and our communities.

**Q5. How will you ensure kiwifruit growers have reliable access to water, and how will you balance competing demands?**

Councils face competing demands, so collaboration with the kiwifruit industry, tangata whenua, and other stakeholders is crucial. Together, freshwater objectives and allocations can reflect all community values and balance environmental protection with economic viability.

We must promote water efficiency by encouraging best practice and technology, and work to streamline the resource consent process for water allocation.

This issue requires a joint approach. Councils (WBOPDC and BOPRC), tangata whenua, and community stakeholders all need to be involved.

Local Waters Done Well must recognise and address the concerns of rural communities. WBOPDC cannot address these on its own.

**Q6. What is your stance on protecting productive horticultural land from urban sprawl and subdivision?**

The rural sector, including farming, horticulture, and tourism, is a key driver of our economy and that of the greater Bay of Plenty.

We must protect this sector by ensuring reliable water access, managing the shift to forestry for carbon farming, and addressing urban sprawl.

Industry stakeholders should actively engage in the current spatial planning process. Competing demands for water and affordable housing must be balanced to support population growth.

Urban sprawl must not undermine our key economic sectors. We need to weigh trade-offs carefully and plan development responsibly.

The council should assess both the needs driving urban expansion and the full costs associated with converting land for this purpose.

**Q7. How will you improve rural road infrastructure to support the movement of produce?**

Funds collected for specific purposes, such as roading on your rates bill, should be allocated accordingly. Rural areas face challenges because there are fewer ratepayers per road than in urban areas.

It is important that any roading charges on your rates bill are directed to roads in your area. I am also committed to ensuring rural roads receive a fair share of general roading funds.

We must recognize the economic value of the rural sector. Council should focus on its core functions to free up resources for essential infrastructure, including roads, water services, utility security, and public safety.

Rural areas have often been viewed as self-sufficient, leading to their needs being overlooked. As council attention has shifted to urban areas, unresolved rural issues have grown, despite the apparent financial benefits of a larger urban rates base.

We need to ensure support is balanced, so the rural sector receives the resources necessary to succeed. This approach benefits everyone.

**Q8. What policies will you support to help growers adapt to climate change impacts?**

No single party can address this issue alone. The WBOPDC, BOPDC, and growers need to collaborate to identify the risks.

Once risks are identified, we can develop initiatives to support growers through sustainable practices, climate-focused services, and funding.

Q8. What policies will you support to help growers adapt to climate change impacts?

Council funding is limited, so we must work with the groups mentioned above, as well as central government and agencies, to secure resources that support both growers and the wider community in addressing climate change impacts.

The council should focus on its core responsibility of ensuring community infrastructure is climate-resilient to a practical standard, recognizing that absolute protection is not possible.