



CHAIR'S REPORT

TO: Environment & Planning Committee

FROM: Michael Higgins, Environment & Planning Committee Chair

REFERENCE: S611

SUBJECT: **CHAIR'S REPORT – REPORT EP09/12/04** - Report prepared for meeting of 11 December 2009

I was fortunate recently, to sit down at a tent and chat to local MP Nick Smith for five minutes and it become half an hour, time that is hard to find with Nick. We spoke primarily of matters to do with Climate change and the ammendment of the Emmissions Trading scheme regulations and also proposed changes to resource management with regards to water and rivers.

I was impressed with the grasp that Nick had on the Carbon sustainability and gas emissions issue. He was able to answer my questions justifying the tax on animal emissions, taking into account the reduction in stock numbers over recent years and justified the Government's decision to extend the pace of change out over a longer term. It is reasonable to assume that if our trading partners moved faster to address climate change issues, NZ also would match that. I have taken the view that while sustainable use of Carbon is the critical factor going forward, the taxing of emmissions yeilds a similar outcome over a shorter term. The taxing of emmissions also addresses the risks of a 2 degree warming of the worlds average temperature. Scientific analysis of the implications of a 2 degree warming are scary, relating to water shortages and the seeming probability of overshooting 450 ppm Co₂ in the atmosphere leads to serious risks of greater temperature increase and associated sea level rise over the next century. These are amazing times in which we live.

We spoke at length about the management of rivers, and the use of water. The Government proposal to engage stakeholders in the Governance of these issues should not effect the Tasman District as much as it will in Regions such as Canterbury where the areas involved are much larger. Our E&P Manager, Dennis Bush-King has been actively involved in the development of proposed changes, and it was good to assure Nick of this Council's confidence in the ability of Dennis to develop sound and practical policy. Mayor Kempthorne is also actively involved in this policy development at a National level and Deputy Mayor Tim is picking up the attendance on Local Government issues. I was assured by Nick, that adoption of water management policy at Regional Council level will remain with the councils. However, the formation of that policy may not be in our hands. It is a good thing that the Rivers and Lakes policy of the TRMP is ready for notification.

The agenda today includes the proposed work programme for next year. I have suggested that a key driver is the need to work within a constrained budget and the Committee may need to consider the programme in that light.

This is the final E&P meeting for the year. May I wish Councillors and staff a merry Christmas, enjoy the celebration and have a happy and productive new year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Michael Higgins
Chair, Environment & Planning Committee