

## MEDIA ADVISORY | HE PĀNUI

# Limited LAB turnouts disappoint district's planners

## Quantity disappoints, quality impresses

Monday, 26 April 2010

A low turnout at public meetings and *hui* being held to discuss how the Coromandel's key towns might take shape over the next 50 years is disappointing to the district's planners keen to hear the public's voice.

Project partners have recorded good attendance at past public meetings and are disappointed the public is not taking this opportunity to influence future decisions on the development of the peninsula.

2010 marks the Local Area Blueprints [LABs] phase of the Coromandel Peninsula Blueprint project, a joint initiative between Thames-Coromandel District Council [TCDC], Environment Waikato, Department of Conservation and Hauraki Whaanui to develop a 50-year strategic framework for managing growth and sustainable development.

Thirteen meetings have been scheduled to give the people of the Coromandel/*Te Tara o Te Ika a Maui* the opportunity to share their views on how the district-wide Blueprint will shape the future of seven local communities across the peninsula.

The first three forums attracted a disappointing turnout which has concerned organisers keen to attract larger numbers to the remaining meetings/*hui*, seven of which will be held next week.

### Public meetings

Whitianga Oceans Resort South]	5 May	7pm – 8.30pm [Whitianga & Mercury Bay
	6 May	1pm – 3pm [Mercury Bay North]
Thames War Memorial Civic Centre	7 May	7.30pm – 9pm

### Hui

Wharekaho Marae	6 May	6pm – 7.30pm
Harataunga Marae	7 May	9am – 10.30am
Koputauaki Marae	7 May	noon – 1.30pm
Manaia School	7 May	3.30pm – 5pm

The final three forums will be held a fortnight later: a *hui* at TCDC's Whangamata Area Office from 1pm on 17 May; a public meeting at the Pauanui Sports and Recreation Club that day starting at 7pm; and, finally, a public meeting at the Tairua Hall, a day later – 18 May, at 7pm.

Project manager Ruth Buckingham says now is the time for people to actively participate in shaping the future of the peninsula.

“This is about recognising what we value, what we want to remain and what we want to change in order to create a future not just for our children, but for future generations.

“The LABs are where the rubber hits the road and the public can make a real difference right now.”

Ms Buckingham says this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the community/*Tangata Whenua* to design a vision of their own settlement considering land use, movement, open space, events and to share their comments to help create the place they'll still be proud to call home.

While the quantity of responses disappoints organisers, the quality of participants' ideas has impressed the Blueprint team.

Those issues which have been raised most commonly include:

- Transport issues - from signage to public transport;
- Employment concerns i.e. wanting to ensure a sustainable community;
- Schools being under threat if populations diminish and, associated with this, attracting younger families into the area;
- Support for volunteer services, especially to support the peak population demands; and
- A strong desire to maintain the character of towns – particularly in Coromandel Township.

Many attendees focused on the Coromandel's opportunities, generating robust discussion among the audiences in both the public forums and focus groups. Some spoke of moving the focus of Whangamata's town centre towards the beach, with access to parking for people with limited mobility.

While the public meetings/hui remain the best opportunity for people to address their concerns, hopes and fears, organisers are resisting the temptation to promote the forums as a shopping list of what will happen, as these meetings are just one part of the detailed 'inquiry by design' process which is being undertaken this year. This proven approach is now at the stage when people are encouraged to come along to speak directly with the people who are creating options for the Coromandel's future.

The Blueprint team is stepping up its campaign to target community groups through email, mail-outs, display material and an advertising campaign.

**ENDS**

For more information please visit [www.coroblueprint.govt.nz](http://www.coroblueprint.govt.nz) or contact **Ruth Buckingham**, Senior Strategic Planner | Blueprint Project Manager | Thames-Coromandel District Council | p: 07 868 0200 | e: [ruth.buckingham@tcdc.govt.nz](mailto:ruth.buckingham@tcdc.govt.nz)