

John Forbes



John Forbes has been a member of the Opotiki District Council since 1986. In 2001 he was elected Mayor. John has provided capable chairmanship to Council, and has also made significant contributions at regional and national levels. For example these include chairing the Rural Sector of Local Government NZ (LGNZ) , co-chairing the Rural Provincial Sector, filling the role of Acting President of LGNZ from time to time, and chairing the Bay of Plenty Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group. John is also active on a number of national working groups of focusing on such things as climate change, engagement with Maori, economic development, and is a member of NZ Walking Access

Commission.

John is passionate about the relationship between economic and social development. He strongly advocates that central government must pay more attention to the development needs and potential of rural communities which collectively total the equivalent population for Wellington and Dunedin, and represent a significant percentage of the land area and a considerable amount of our nation's wealth. He advocates that policy makers need to better understand the dynamics of rural communities, and how they differ from metropolitans.

Under John's leadership, Opotiki District Council has actively supported the aspirations of local Whakatohea people. Whakatohea's vision is to create jobs and wealth through marine farming – a re-emergence of a prosperous economy based on their relationship with the sea. For a decade they have worked with others towards gaining resource consent for a 3,800 hectare marine farm off the Opotiki Coast – the largest in NZ. When fully operational, the farm has the capacity to significantly transform social and economic futures for Opotiki and the Eastern Bay of Plenty, and to make a significant contribution to the stepped change which NZ Inc. is striving towards.

The Council has actively facilitated strong community and regional support for Whakatohea and the aquaculture potential. For years John and the Council team have played many practical roles as advocate, constructively critical thinker, and practical supporter, rather than, as John so eloquently puts it, being “yet another brick in the wall”.