

From: Terry [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 6 March 2017 3:18 p.m.
To: LGC
Subject: West Coast Reorganisation Proposals

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to submit my views on the current proposals for the reorganisation of West Coast Local Government. I have been employed /elected in West Coast Local Government in excess of 30 years and am currently serving in my fourth term as an elected councillor for the West Coast Regional Council having formerly been employed as a manager with the Buller District Council.

I have been supportive of a range of 'shared services' recently implemented by the four West Coast Councils and firmly believe that there is scope for further sharing of services not least of which could include planning(resource management), building control, general operations/engineering, financial management and environmental health services as a minimum where there was a positive mind-set to amalgamate these services. Effectively speaking I can see no specific logical reasons why all local government statutory functions as enshrined within the provisions of the Local Government Act 2002 could not be amalgamated as a single unitary authority on the West Coast subject to a number of provisos.

It is well understood that the total residential population of the West Coast region is a declining 32,000 and with such a minimal population it is difficult to understand how such a population can support four separate councils consisting of three district and one regional councils without paying prohibitively increasing rates. From my observations the major concern of forming a unitary authority is that Westland and Buller District would be likely to lose their identities and fear the seat of local government would be based in Greymouth. It seems to me that this fear is based more on parochialism than any other logical reasoning. In my view such a fear could be easily overcome by an appropriately elected political representation reorganisation in a similar way to that which currently exists with the West Coast Regional Council and based on a population basis. Effectively this would provide more elected politicians to Westland and Buller as jointly they have a higher population than Grey District

It is my belief however that proposed historical amalgamations have been poorly investigated, with promises of financial savings never being realised, and have inevitably resulted in increased rates and run away spending.

Before any such reorganisation could be realistically considered, an in depth financial analysis should be undertaken with particular emphasis on reviewing other areas poor investigations and unrealistic expectations as to how and why these analysis have not proved to be realistic. If and only if, after an in depth evaluation of the costs/benefits clearly show there are benefits to be achieved without increasing rates, and the total statutory functions are able to be achieved, then I would support the establishment of a single unitary authority for the West Coast region.

Over recent weeks, I understand there has been some discussion over a reorganisation and an amalgamation by establishment of three (3) unitary authorities based on the district boundaries of the three District Councils. In my view such a proposal has little if any merit, and appears to be based on the retention of parochialism at any cost. In my view, paying for such an investigation would result in an absolute waste of money and indicates to me the lack of understanding of the proponents actual functions or resource requirements necessary, to form a unitary authority.

Yours faithfully
Terry Archer MBE

