



Concerned Ratepayers Kapiti

Being proactive to create positive communities

26 August 2026

Hon Simon Watts
Minister for Local Government
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

By email to: S.Watts@ministers.govt.nz

OPPOSITION TO ANY FORCED MERGER OF KAPITI COAST DISTRICT COUNCIL INTO A WIDER WELLINGTON REGION UNITARY AUTHORITY

We are writing to seek a commitment from you that the Kapiti Coast District Council area will not be forced into a merger with other Councils across the Wellington and Wairarapa regions, as proposed by a number of other councils in the greater Wellington region.

Concerned Ratepayers Kapiti is a voluntary local community group, established in late 2024, to work for fair and sustainable rates on the Kapiti Coast. Over the past two years we have challenged the Kapiti Coast District Council (KCDC) to get its spending under control and to refocus its activities back to the provision of core local public services and local infrastructure.

Concerned Ratepayers Kapiti has been closely watching the current Head Start/Backstop process, and proposals regarding a possible amalgamation of Kapiti Coast District Council (KCDC) with the Greater Wellington Regional Council functions.

Concerned Ratepayers Kapiti is open to an amalgamation – but not any amalgamation or an amalgamation for its own sake. Any amalgamation must show a net financial benefit to Kapiti residents, and give Kapiti residents effective representation and control over their local affairs.

There needs to be sensible boundaries for any new amalgamated entity; we suggest they be based around natural water catchment areas.

An amalgamation should not be decided by other Councils – or by Cabinet operating alone - and then imposed on the Kapiti community. Kapiti residents should be the ones to decide, through a referendum of residents.

We do not support a forced amalgamation with the wider Wellington and Wairarapa councils, as outlined in the proposal co-ordinated by Wellington City Council. Kapiti residents should not be forced into a situation where they will end up paying for the expensive investment mistakes made by Wellington or years of chronic underinvestment in infrastructure. Moreover, whatever final merger

options are agreed, the transition costs should not cost tens or hundreds of millions of dollars, as has sometimes been suggested.

The current Government's process is rushed and the information required to make a sensible decisions is missing. The analysis of options that we have seen is qualitative rather than quantitative, and at best is speculative and reflects more the biases of the authors rather than a sound basis for decision-making. As well as asking you to reject any notion of a forced merger, we are seeking your agreement to a slower, evidence-based process, that has residents in control.

Concerned Ratepayers Kapiti has published a full statement on the Government's current amalgamation process, set out in the appendix.

The Government's Head Start process has been effective in flushing out those Councils that were ready for rationalisation, but needed to be nudged into action. Such Councils should be allowed to get on with it. But Kapiti is not one of those Councils. It should be allowed, with its residents, to take the time to make the best decision for the region based on evidence and facts.

We look forward to your reply. Your reply – or any absence of a reply – will be published on our Facebook and website.

I have copied this letter to Tim Costly, MP for the Otaki electorate, and to Janet Holborow, Mayor of the Kapiti Coast District Council and Darren Edwards, CE of the Kapiti Coast District Council.

Yours Sincerely



Chris Harwood

Chair, Concerned Ratepayers Kapiti

Email: concernedratepayerskapiti@gmail.com

cc Tim Costley by email tim.costleyMP@parliament.govt.nz
cc Janet Holborow by email Janet.Holborow@kapiticoast.govt.nz
cc Darren Edwards by email Darren.Edwards@kapiticoast.govt.nz

APPENDIX: CONCERNED RATEPAYERS KAPITI POSITION STATEMENT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATION – AUGUST 2026

That Concerned Ratepayers Kapiti:

1. Supports the principle of amalgamation for the Kapiti district if it benefits the Kapiti community and achieves CRK's primary objectives of keeping rates and rates increases under control, reducing wasteful and excessive discretionary spending and improving financial management. There would need to be a net financial benefit over the medium term for Kapiti ratepayers and residents, and continued effective local representation and control.
2. Supports the integration of regional council functions in district council functions, since the Greater Wellington Regional Council does not provide effective representation and services in the Kapiti community for the costs it imposes on ratepayers and residents. A change is required. CRK therefore supports amalgamation based on sensible boundaries, with careful consideration of water catchment areas and functions. But it cannot be any form of amalgamation for amalgamation's sake, nor one that is voted by other Councils to include Kapiti and then imposed on the Kapiti community.
3. If the conditions in (2) above cannot be satisfied, CRK supports the establishment of a single Kapiti unitary authority based around natural water catchment areas (which may require slight boundary changes to the Kapiti district).
4. Does not support a forced amalgamation with the greater Wellington or Wairarapa region. Any amalgamation option chosen must retain continued effective local representation and control. Kapiti residents have no interest in cross-subsidising the expensive investment mistakes of Wellington City and its chronic underinvestment in core infrastructure. Such a forced amalgamation would also not meet the need for sensible consideration of the natural water catchment area criterion in (2) above. CRK does not support an approach which would result in what should be local decisions being made in a Wellington-based Council, dominated by Wellington-based interests.
5. Believes and amalgamation should ensure that principles of prudence and reasonableness prevail in regard to transition costs imposed on ratepayers. Transition should not cost tens, or hundreds, of millions of dollars. Prudent financial management of the transition should not provide an opportunity to engage a range of "change consultants" and enrich their bottom line at ratepayers' expense.
6. Believes that any final amalgamation proposal should be subject to approval by Kapiti residents in a referendum, supported by full information provided to residents on long term costs, benefits, transition costs, impact on rates levels, and proposed governance arrangements, particularly how Kapiti's voice will be heard in future decision-making.