

## Ash Hillis

### Q1. Contact Details

<b>Name</b>	Ash Hillis
<b>What Council are you standing for?</b>	Bay of Plenty Regional
<b>What position(s) are you standing for on the above Council?</b>	Tauranga General

### Q2. What drives you to run as a candidate in the local body elections? What do you hope to achieve?

I am running because I want to ensure that decision-making at the regional level is focused on outcomes that directly benefit residents, ratepayers, and industries like horticulture. Horticulture, Agriculture and farming are vital to the economy of the region. Having grown up in Tauranga and Te Puke, I understand how important kiwifruit is to both our economy and our communities. I want to bring fresh leadership that is practical, transparent, and focused on delivering infrastructure, water security, and fair representation for our growers and farmers.

### Q3. How will you support the kiwifruit industry?

The kiwifruit sector is a backbone of our region's economy and supports thousands of jobs and livelihoods. I will advocate for policy settings that prioritise reliable water infrastructure, fair regulation, and strong rural transport networks. I will also push for clear, evidence-based environmental standards that protect our waterways without placing unnecessary costs or uncertainty on growers. Its about utilising data, science, innovation and technology to enable our industries to succeed within proven environmental frameworks.

### Q4. What will you do to support the development of seasonal worker housing, especially in rural areas?

I will support streamlined consenting processes, practical planning rules, and partnerships that enable growers to provide fit-for-purpose accommodation on or near orchards. Well-planned seasonal housing reduces pressure on urban rentals and transport networks, while ensuring workers are well-supported and integrated into our communities.

### Q5. How will you ensure kiwifruit growers have reliable access to water, and how will you balance competing demands?

Reliable access to water is essential for the kiwifruit industry. I support investment in long-term storage and infrastructure, but also streamlining consents for practical solutions like rainwater tanks, private bores, and aquifer exploration. These tools give growers flexibility while easing pressure on shared supply. At the same time, I believe allocation decisions must be transparent and balanced, so that communities, growers, and the environment are all protected.

### Q6. What is your stance on protecting productive horticultural land from urban sprawl and subdivision?

Our best horticultural soils are irreplaceable and should not be lost to short-term urban sprawl. I will advocate for planning rules that prioritise higher-density housing in appropriate urban areas, while protecting productive land for food production. This balance is essential for both economic resilience and long-term food security.

Q7. How will you improve rural road infrastructure to support the movement of produce?

Rural road networks are vital for moving kiwifruit safely and efficiently. I will advocate for targeted investment in maintaining and upgrading rural roads, seeking to leverage central government funding mechanisms and alternative funding models. Ensuring they can handle heavy vehicles during peak harvest times. Better roads not only support the industry but also improve safety for rural communities.

Q8. What policies will you support to help growers adapt to climate change impacts?

Climate change presents real challenges for kiwifruit growers. I will support policies that invest in research and innovation, such as more resilient crop management practices and new technology. I will also back infrastructure that reduces climate risk, like improved drainage and flood protection, so growers can continue to operate successfully in a changing environment. It's about leveraging real world data and science as well as grower and community expertise to shape around the best outcomes for people and environment.