

Mateawa Keelan

Q1. Contact Details

Name	Mateawa Keelan
What Council are you standing for?	Te Tairāwhiti
What position(s) are you standing for on the above Council?	Councillor Maori Ward

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

What drives me to run as a candidate in the local body elections is a deep commitment to equity, climate resilience, and whānau-led decision-making. I've seen firsthand how rural communities, whenua Māori, and primary producers are impacted by rating pressures, infrastructure gaps, and climate risk. I'm standing to ensure council decisions reflect local realities and Tiriti-based partnerships. I hope to achieve fairer systems, stronger community voice, and practical support for landowners and growers across Te Tairāwhiti.

Q3. How will you support the kiwifruit industry?

As a candidate for local council, I'm committed to ensuring that rural industries like kiwifruit are supported through fair, climate-resilient, and whānau-led policy. My background as a whenua Māori landowner, beef farmer, and governance professional gives me firsthand insight into the challenges growers face, from rating pressures to infrastructure gaps and climate risk. I will advocate for equitable land use policy, improved rural transport and connectivity, and support for workforce development and local enterprise. I believe council must work alongside growers, not above them, recognising the economic, cultural, and environmental value they bring to Te Tairāwhiti. My goal is to strengthen partnerships, unlock funding, and ensure council decisions reflect the realities of those working the land.

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

I will advocate for practical, locally grounded solutions to seasonal worker housing especially in rural areas where infrastructure is limited but the need is high. That includes supporting flexible zoning for on-farm and marae-based accommodation, co-investment in modular and relocatable housing, and partnerships with growers, iwi, and community boards. I'll push for council to streamline consents, unlock funding, and prioritise housing that's safe, dignified, and responsive to the realities of rural labour and whānau wellbeing.

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

I will advocate for a fair, climate-resilient approach to water access that reflects both economic needs and kaitiakitanga. For kiwifruit growers, that means supporting reliable allocation systems, catchment-based planning, and infrastructure investment that protects supply in drought and flood conditions. I'll work with growers, hapū, and other landowners to co-design water strategies that balance horticulture, biodiversity, and whānau wellbeing, guided by Te Mana o te Wai and grounded in local realities.

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

I support protecting productive horticultural land from urban sprawl and inappropriate subdivision. Our whenua is a taonga essential for food sovereignty, economic resilience, and intergenerational wellbeing. I will advocate for land use planning that prioritises high-value growing areas, restricts speculative

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development, and supports whānau-led enterprise. We must balance housing needs with the long-term value of horticulture, ensuring decisions reflect local realities, climate risk, and the importance of whenua Māori and primary production.

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

I will advocate for climate-resilient upgrades to rural roads, bridges, and accessways especially in areas critical to horticulture and primary production. That includes co-funded investment in flood-prone and erosion-affected routes, streamlined maintenance schedules, and better coordination between council, growers, and central government. I'll support mapping freight routes used by producers and prioritising them in infrastructure planning. Reliable transport is essential for moving produce, supporting local enterprise, and ensuring rural communities remain connected and productive.

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

I will support policies that help growers adapt to climate change through resilience, innovation, and partnership. That includes co-funded infrastructure upgrades to protect against flooding and erosion, flexible land use planning that enables climate-smart horticulture, and catchment-based water strategies. I'll advocate for council support in mapping risk zones, unlocking funding for protective planting and soil health, and partnering with growers, hapū, and scientists to co-design solutions that reflect local realities and Te Mana o te Wai