

A kākābeak is a taonga of Aotearoa...

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Liam was one of five young speakers invited to address the new HBRC councillors on Wednesday 12 November 2025. Their brief: to talk about what the environment means to them, their hopes for Hawke's Bay a generation from now – and the message they want councillors to take with them.

Kia ora koutou katoa
Ko Liam tōku ingoa
Nō Motatapu ahau

My name is Liam and I'm from Lindisfarne College. Thank you for opportunity to welcome you, our new councillors, and to share what the environment means to me.

Recently our Green Team went to on a trip to Ōmarunui Landfill to understand the impact organic waste is having on our region.

What we saw was fairly confronting. Organic waste is not decomposing and methane is being released. The landfill is filling faster than it ever should, all because we're burying organic material that could be composted and be returned back to our whenua – our land.

For me, the environment isn't just the trees and the river we see every day. It's the water we drink, and the sea, and all the life there is.

I love being outdoors – especially sailing – and it reminds me of how everything in nature is connected – all part of one living ecosystem. But sometimes when I'm sailing, I see rubbish or plastic floating around and it hits me how much damage people can cause to places we love – and how we're spoiling it for generations to come.

In 25 years' time, I hope Hawke's Bay is a place where everyone truly understands why separating organic waste is really, really important. Right now, too much organic waste ends up in Ōmarunui Landfill where it takes up space and produces harmful gases instead of being turned into compost that could nourish our soil.

I want people to think twice before throwing things away – and to reuse, compost and recycle whenever they can. If we can do that, we will reduce the waste in landfill, cut our emissions and keep our rivers clean for many more generations to come.

And so to our councillors: we need you to lead the way and make bold decisions to protect our environment. Reduce the huge amount of organic waste that's gone into Ōmarunui. Every truckload that's buried adds to the problem and brings the landfill closer to full. Please consider how we can better educate our community about separating organic waste because once that space is gone, it's gone.

We're not asking this as a school assignment: we're asking this because this is our future. As regional councillors, you have the ability to create real change. If we keep going at the current rate, our generation will be left to deal with the consequences of the problems that could have been prevented.

A kākābeak is a taonga of Aotearoa. Once common across our land, but now rare and carefully protected. It is a great example of when we give our care and attention to something fragile it can recover and flourish and once again bring its beauty to the world.

Just like this plant, our environment needs the same type of care and commitment from all of us – from our communities, from our leaders and from our generation.

Ngā mihi nui. Thank you.