



OUR PLACE

# Ko Konei

Your Whakatāne District Council  
Community Update - June 2015

## Council votes 'yes' to Energy Trust share purchase

The Whakatāne District Council has confirmed its support for an Eastern Bay Energy Trust proposal to buy all of Horizon Energy. The Energy Trust currently owns 77.29% of Horizon and must obtain majority support from consumers to increase that shareholding.

Mayor Tony Bonne is encouraging community members to vote 'yes' to the share purchase in the Trust's consumer poll, which opened yesterday and runs until 26 June.

"We think the profits from Horizon, the local lines company, should stay local and benefit the whole community," he says. "The Energy Trust is dedicated to helping make the Eastern Bay a positive, educated and healthy community. We want them to do even more good for the community and to do that, the Trust needs our support."

Since it was established in 1994, the Eastern Bay Energy Trust has returned more than \$33 million to the community for energy-related projects. It currently grants \$1.5 million per year to community organisations including marae, schools, clubs, preschools and district councils. Recent support for council projects includes Wharaurangi's lighting; energy components for the Whakatāne Library and Exhibition Centre; and Taneatua playground barbecues.

Anyone with a power account can vote in the consumer poll. Voting documents will be in your letterbox soon.

For more information, go to [www.ebet.org.nz](http://www.ebet.org.nz)

## Whakatāne residents asked to complete broadband survey



The Whakatāne District Council is seeking community input, via a simple survey, to help secure some of the \$360 million in Government funding available to extend its broadband initiatives and expand mobile coverage.

Earlier this year, central government announced an additional \$152 to \$210 million to extend Ultrafast Broadband (UFB) coverage, \$100 million to extend Rural Broadband Initiative (RBI) coverage, and \$50 million to address mobile black spots on main highways and in key tourist areas.

Local authorities interested in participating in the programmes have been invited to submit Registrations of Interest (ROI), which will require information about the area and a specific programme proposal, so that potential suppliers can formulate and submit bids. Whakatāne District Council has developed a survey for the public to complete, which will inform the ROI and allow it to gauge what the community's current connection needs are, and what broadband services they may need in the future.

To access the survey, visit [www.whakatane.govt.nz/broadband-survey](http://www.whakatane.govt.nz/broadband-survey) or contact Whakatāne District Council on 07 306 0500 for more information.



## Website tops national ranking

The Whakatāne District Council's website has been rated the best of the 78 local government websites evaluated by the Association of Local Government Information Management (ALGIM).

Each year, ALGIM evaluates all New Zealand city, district and regional council websites, based on their adherence to web standards, accessibility testing done by the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind, accessibility on mobile devices, and response times to email and Facebook queries.

Council Public Affairs Manager Ross Boreham says the website's improvement in the ALGIM rankings over the past three years confirms an ongoing commitment to providing the best possible customer service via the Council's online channels. "We used feedback from the 2014 ALGIM survey to find further ways of improving our performance. These included the addition of new services, such as online mapping and dog registration," Mr Boreham says.

"Another key feature contributing to the website's award-winning status is the use of responsive design, meaning that it can be easily accessed and viewed across multiple platforms including tablets and smartphones."

## Roading projects on the go



### GORGE ROAD SHARED-USE PATH WORK BEGINS

Construction of a 1.25 km shared-use cycle and pedestrian path alongside Gorge Road in Whakatāne will start this month and be completed in September. The 2.0-2.5 metre wide concrete path from the bottom of Gorge Road to Ada Vale will complete the shared-use pathway linking the Ōhope Beach and Whakatāne communities.



Pedestrian access will be restricted at times during the project, to ensure public safety around active work sites. Access to the Birdwalk and the adjacent carpark at the western end of Gorge Road is likely to be closed for a short period while the pathway is constructed in that area. Advice of any closures will be provided via local media and social media.

### CULVERT INSTALLATION AFFECTS STRAND ACCESS

The installation of a large box culvert under The Strand will affect traffic flows from McAlister Street into Whakatāne's CBD for the next two months. The four-metre by two-metre culvert replaces three 900 mm pipes and will quadruple the potential stormwater flow capacity from the area to the south of The Strand. Work on the culvert installation began this month and is expected to be completed in mid-August. During most of that period, road access will be restricted to a single lane, but full road closures will be required at times. Alternative access to the CBD from the west will be available via Bracken Street and Buddle Street, or from the south, via Commerce Street.

### WAIIOHAU FOOTPATH

A project for the construction of a footpath serving the township of Waiohau is currently underway with work scheduled to be completed by the end of June 2015.

### THORNTON (RANGITĀIKI BRIDGE) RURAL INTERSECTION ACTIVE WARNING SIGNS

Design drawings are currently being reviewed for the installation of electronic warning signs to warn motorists on Thornton Road of vehicles turning out of side roads, where visibility is restricted.

### TE TEKOKO SCHOOL ACTIVE WARNING SIGNS

A combined project with the NZ Transport Agency is underway for the upgrade and installation of active warning signs around Te Teko School, to be completed by the end of June.

## Proposed Long Term Plan - small reduction in average rates increase



The Whakatāne District Council's 2015-25 Long Term Plan (LTP) deliberations process has seen a number of changes introduced, but the additional costs involved have been offset by a variety of funding measures, allowing a small reduction in the average rates increase across the District.

Mayor Tony Bonne says that as a result of submissions from the public and the Council executive, Councillors agreed to make provision for several new initiatives and change the timing proposed for other LTP projects.

"The LTP process is always a balancing act, because on one hand we want to see the District make progress and meet the community's service expectations, and on the other, Councillors are very much aware that rates affordability is a key factor," he says. "We believe that we have achieved that balance and that under the circumstances, to be able to fractionally reduce the average rates cost increase to 3.21 percent is an excellent outcome."

### LONG TERM PLAN CHANGES INCLUDE:

- An increase in the Whakatāne Wharf repair project budget from \$4.5 million to \$6.0 million, with the work to be brought forward to 2017/18 (to be funded from Ports and Harbours renewal reserves and the Harbour fund – no rating impact)
  - An increase in Airport operating costs of \$25,000 a year
  - Providing \$85,000 in 2015/16 to develop the concept and detailed site design for a world class 'Heritage Hikoī' to replace Whakatāne's Culture and Heritage Trail
  - \$870,000 to be budgeted for the upgrade of the Wairaka Centennial Park (including external contributions of \$270,000, with a start to the project contingent upon \$200,000 in external/community funding being confirmed; the balance of the project cost to come from Parks and Reserves and the Harbour Fund)
  - The provision of \$115,000 to install UV water treatment at the Whakatāne Aquatic and Fitness Centre; \$175,000 for customer service, entranceway access and evacuation improvements and an office and payment system upgrade; and \$111,000 for progressive gym equipment upgrades from 2015/16 through to 2021 (a rating impact of up to \$52,000, to be funded through the General Rate)
  - \$65,000 to be provided for the renewal of water supply flow monitoring equipment for the Whakatāne, Ōhope and Plains schemes (to be funded from Water depreciation reserves)
  - Establishment of an Environment and Heritage Fund of \$20,000 a year (a response to proposed District Plan submissions – to be funded from general rates)
  - Providing \$20,000 towards the \$50,000 cost of opening the Edgecumbe College pool to the community during the summer months, the balance to come from community/external funder contributions
- To offset the \$336,500 total rating impact of the proposed changes, the Council approved a number of adjustments to project scheduling and the use of interest revenue from the proposed transfer of pensioner housing to a Community Housing Provider to cover debt-funding costs for the District Plan, Whakatāne Museum redevelopment and proposed War Memorial Hall redevelopment. The net effect of the proposed funding changes is to reduce the proposed average rate increase across the District in 2015/16 by 0.1 percent (from 3.22 to 3.21 percent). The changes also result in small reductions in the forecast increases for eight of the next nine years covered by the LTP.
- Outcomes from the LTP submission hearings and deliberations have been included in the proposed LTP, which is undergoing an audit process before being reported back for Council adoption on 25 June.

Community support for the 'big decisions' highlighted in the Whakatāne District Council's 2015-25 Long Term Plan (LTP) consultation document has seen all of the preferred options included in the final plan.

The consultation document survey saw 72 percent of the 181 respondents support continuing most Council services at the current level, while 69 percent also supported the rates and debt levels proposed for the next 10 years.