



OUR PLACE

# Ko Konei

Your Whakatāne District Council Community Update - June 2017



## Road repairs making good progress

Extensive road works are underway on Te Whāiti Road and Ruatāhuna Road in the wake of April's storms, which left many parts of the road impassable. Whakatāne District Council's Transportation Manager Martin Taylor says a huge amount of slip material has been removed, and several washed-out sections of road are having to be completely reinstated. It's hoped Te Whāiti Road will be reopened to local traffic by mid-June, with safe two-way, unsealed access available for all traffic by the end of July.

## New signage for wetlands project

Whakatāne Intermediate School's Awatapu Wetlands Project has new signage, thanks to the Kopeopeo Lions. The Wetlands Project has been a cooperative effort between the School and the Lions for some time, with pupils pitching in to help maintain floating wetland pods of purei or pukio plants, as well as doing regular clean-ups via kayak. Graham Henton, Environmental Science teacher at the Intermediate, says improving the water quality of the lagoon fits in perfectly with the school's long-term goal of making it a community resource.

"Our students use the lagoon for their practical outworking of the principle of 'Kaitiakitanga' — showing care and respect for all that is around us. The lagoon is perfectly suited as a context for environmental learning, as it provides a multiplicity of ecosystems, all of which can be used to support student learning."

Kopeopeo Lions became involved in the project in 2013, and with funding and support from Whakatāne District Council, Tāneatua Lions, Kauri Park Nursery, Waterclean Technologies, Farmlands, Nova Energy, Naturally Native Plants, Beulah Services and Whakatāne Roofing, it has advanced steadily. The completion of the signage explaining the project has been a milestone, though



From left, standing: Tom Webb, Ray Erskine, Peter Mottram, Paddy Briscoe, Les Baker, and Peter Dickson of the Kopeopeo Lions; from left in front: Jordyn Rhodes, Ari Gibson, Ethan Burke, Taylor Charters, Marina Sirkku and Graham Henton of Whakatāne Intermediate.

Mr Henton notes that this is an ongoing project for the School.

"We are blessed to have it immediately adjacent to our school, so have a vested interest in doing our best to make it as pristine as is humanly possible," he says. "The Lions have worked with us tirelessly in an endeavour to make this a reality, and I give huge credit to them."

## Storm and flood damage force 3.9% average rates increase

Additional costs relating to flooding and storm damage caused by cyclones Debbie and Cook in April will add close to 1% to rates costs across the Whakatāne District for the 2017/18 year, taking the average increase to 3.9%.

Previous draft budgets had indicated an average rates increase of 2.96% for the District in 2017/18, but with estimated unrecoverable costs relating to the storm events adding more than \$1 million to the Annual Plan budget, the likely average increase considered at last week's extraordinary Whakatāne District Council meeting had risen to 4.22%.

To bring the maximum average rates increase into line with the Council's financial strategy limit of 3.9% and address one-off impacts created by last year's District revaluation on the rural sector and the Edgcombe community in particular, Council elected members adopted a range of measures to bring costs down. These included:

- Utilising \$50,000 from Edgcombe's stormwater operating reserves to reduce rates cost for all urban properties in the township
- Utilising part of the Harbour Fund's 2017/18 operating surplus to part-fund the cost of activities on harbour-owned land (including the Library and Exhibition Centre; Visitor Information Centre; and parks, reserves and gardens), allowing the overall rating requirement to be reduced
- Increasing the portion of total rates funded through the Uniform Annual General Charge (UAGC) from 28% to 30% (the maximum allowed), to partially offset the disproportionate impact of property value increases on rates for high value rural properties

Mayor Tony Bonne said that while the increase in average rates was regrettable, the community already had a "realistic expectation that [April]'s storms would have an impact on costs".

"The measures adopted to address rates costs are pragmatic and also help to reduce the financial impacts on Edgcombe properties and on the farming sector," he said. "In addition, the postponement and remission of rates for all residential properties made uninhabitable due to flood damage will help get the owners through the next few difficult months while their homes are repaired."

Other additional costs included in the 2017/18 budget were \$40,000 for tree management and inspections on the Ōhope and Whakatāne escarpments, and \$100,000 to continue undertaking initial and detailed seismic assessments on Council assets.

Taking into account the various measures adopted by the Council, indicative rates costs calculations for District communities and sectors are:

- Whakatāne Urban low value (capital value \$155,000) properties, +4.4%
- Whakatāne urban average (CV \$355,000), +4.98%
- Whakatāne urban high (CV \$1.1 million), +4.48%
- Edgcombe average (CV \$295,000), +5.66% (down from 8.16%)
- Matatā average (CV\$293,000), -9.23%
- Matatā high (CV \$640,000), -11.81%
- Murupara urban (CV \$61,000), +4.43%
- Murupara lifestyle (CV \$205,000), +0.4%
- Te Teko (CV \$111,000), -0.76%
- Ōtarawairere (CV \$820,000), -1.19%
- Ōhope low (CV \$510,000) +6.28%
- Ōhope average (CV \$640,000), +5.26%
- Ōhope high (CV \$1.22 million), +6.8%
- Tāneatua (CV \$134,000), +3.76%
- Rural low (CV \$58,000), +1.88%
- Rural average (CV \$965,000), -0.71%
- Rural high (CV \$3.19 million), +15.05% (down from 19.93%)

The Council will make final rates decisions when it adopts the 2017/18 Annual Plan on 22 June.



The Whakatāne Ki Mua Community Vision project was interrupted by ex-cyclones Debbie and Cook and has now had its timeframe extended.

Whakatāne Ki Mua – Whakatāne Moving Forward is a collaborative effort by a broad range of community organisations and groups to gather feedback from all sectors of the community on what they love about the District and what direction they want to see it take in the future.

The project started in March this year, with surveys, events and workshops asking for input on what people see as the biggest opportunities for the area and what would make it even better. However, the arrival of the cyclones saw the focus of many people shift to the emergency response and recovery operations in Edgcombe and the wider District. New surveys will be arriving in letterboxes next week, and residents have until 30 June 2017 to provide feedback. Forms can also be found at libraries, pools, the airport, hospital and public buildings throughout the District, or you can visit whakatanekimua.nz for further information.

The project offers people a great chance to help shape the future of the District, and there are also some great prizes up for grabs to encourage people to get involved.

## McAlister Street pump station upgrade reaches final stage

A major upgrade to the McAlister Street stormwater pump station has reached its final stage, with modifications to the existing pump house structure being undertaken over the next four months. This follows the completion of a new 20-metre long box culvert installation through the stopbank during the summer.

Whakatāne District Council General Manager Infrastructure, Tomasz Krawczyk, says the final stage of the upgrade will see major modifications to the pump house, and during this time auxiliary pumps will be used to control water flows. "The pump station will only have 30% of its usual operational capacity while the modifications are being undertaken, so we have two tractor-driven pumps onsite as backup," he says. "This really is the most important and technically challenging part of the project, and it was pleasing that our contingency plans worked well during the recent flood event, with only minor stormwater issues experienced."

Mr Krawczyk says the cost of the project is almost \$3.4 million, but adds that the McAlister Street pump station is a vital component of the town's infrastructure.



"This is the first major upgrade to the pump station since its construction in the mid-1960s," he says, "and when completed, it will nearly double our pumping capacity, from 3.2 to nearly 6 cubic metres per second. The gravity discharge through the box culvert will double that capacity, when the river level is below the discharge point, so it's certainly a very useful long-term investment."

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