

## SHARE YOUR ROAD SAFETY STORIES

The Eastern Bay Road Safety Programme is seeking real-life stories which will strike a chord with young drivers.

Following a meeting with Australian story activist Moya Sayer-Jones earlier this month, the programme has identified stories as a way to raise awareness of road safety issues and promote life-saving changes in attitudes.

"It's a way for us to engage with young drivers in a more personal way," Whakatāne District Council senior community development advisor Erena Brew says. "We want to hear how young people encourage their friends to drive safely, with the aim of developing key messages which are relevant to young drivers."

"Every time we take to the road, there are two possible outcomes – we arrive safely at our destination, or we don't. What we do as drivers, and passengers, can make a crucial difference. If you've stopped a friend driving drunk, offered help at an accident,

successfully avoided a crash, pulled over when you felt tired, or taken some other action which has helped ensure you have had a safe journey, we'd love to hear about it.

"We're also keen to hear about any times your driving experience wasn't so good. Maybe you've been distracted or tired, or driven in a state when you know you shouldn't be on the road and have been involved in a crash? What happened and what did you learn from the experience?"

Whether it's a sentence or a saga, let us know via Facebook: (<https://www.facebook.com/Road.safety.Eastern.Bay>) or email ([sharetheroad@whakatane.govt.nz](mailto:sharetheroad@whakatane.govt.nz)). Confidentiality is assured.



## NEW WHAKATĀNE CYCLE PARK OPENS

Cyclists can now spin their wheels without taking to the roads with the opening of a new bike park in Whakatāne. Situated at Warren Park, the new park is a joint effort between Whakatāne West Rotary, the Whakatāne Community Board and the Cycle Action Whakatāne Charitable Trust.



Whakatāne Community Board member Neville Delahunty (left) assists at the official opening of the Rotary Bike Park on Saturday, 15 February.

The new facility features a 1km cycling and walking trail around the park and junior and intermediate level 'pump' tracks. The third and final stage of the development will be completed this autumn and includes an advanced jumps track with a four-metre high 'drop in'.

## SPORT NZ RURAL TRAVEL FUND

Are you involved in a sports group catering to young people from 5-19 years old who need to travel to compete in regular sporting competitions? If so, we may be able to help.

Sport NZ has recognised the need to assist rural communities and has provided a grant to help rural sports clubs and school teams involving young people in this age group meet the cost of transport to local sporting competitions.

A total of \$14,710.95 is available for allocation in the Whakatāne District. Funding is not available to representative teams travelling to competition games.

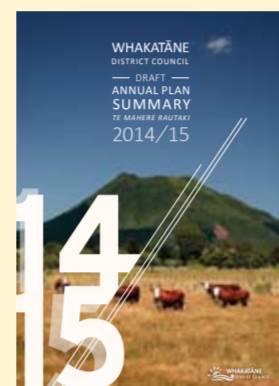
Further information on the fund can be obtained from Janie Storey, Administration Officer Community on 306 0530 or 0800 306 0500.

Application forms can be obtained from the Whakatāne District Council Offices, Public Libraries or on [www.whakatane.govt.nz](http://www.whakatane.govt.nz). Applications close at 5.00 pm on Monday, 31 March 2014 and should be posted to Whakatāne District Council, Private Bag 1002, Whakatāne, 3158.

## SUBMISSIONS OPENING SOON

Have Your Say!

Interested in what the Whakatāne District Council has planned for the upcoming year? Want to know how much Council is proposing to spend and on what? What to have your say?



Now is your chance. Submissions on the Council's draft Annual Plan 2014/15 open on Friday 21 March, with the consultation period extending through to Tuesday 22 April.

The draft Annual Plan lays out the proposed work plan and budgets for the next year (from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015) and explains any changes from the programme set out in the 2012-22 Long-Term Plan. All submissions will be considered at hearings to be held in April.

The draft Annual Plan 2014/15 is also responsible for setting rates charges for the upcoming year. An average rates increase of 2.91% is proposed across the District, which the Council believes strikes an effective balance between rates affordability, maintaining service quality and delivering progress. Actual rates changes will vary for each

individual property, with some potentially having a decrease.

A general overview and examples of the proposed rates changes in a range of communities will be provided in draft Annual Plan Summary, which will be delivered to all households and Post Office boxes during the last week of March, and in the draft Annual Plan itself. The summary will also provide details of the major projects planned. For those that would like more detail, the draft Annual Plan 2014/15 will be available at District libraries, Council service centres and also on our website ([www.whakatane.govt.nz](http://www.whakatane.govt.nz)) from 21 March 2014.

Please take the time to read about our plans and give us your thoughts. Your submission is important, because it will tell us what you like, what you don't like and where we could be doing things differently. By submitting on the draft Annual Plan, you will be contributing to the future of the District.

Consultation opens on 21 March 2014 and will close at 5.00pm on 22 April 2014.

## STRAND SET FOR FACELIFT

The Whakatāne CBD is set for a major facelift following approval by the Whakatāne District Council of the Strand Plaza redevelopment. The project will see the removal of three buildings, from 132 to 142 The Strand, to make way for a pedestrian plaza providing access to the rear of The Strand and linking the town more closely to its harbour.

Designed by Boffa Miskell, a leading New Zealand environmental planning and design consultancy, the Plaza's design would be consistent with themes introduced in the Town Vision Plan. These would include seating that could be removed if

necessary to open up the space for a range of community uses, as well as decking, trees, bicycle stands and bollards. It would also feature an LED lighting pathway and the roadway on the river side of the Plaza would use boldly coloured banding to connect the two spaces.

A major feature of the Plaza will be a glass and steel verandah designed to link the Plaza with existing stores on The Strand. The verandah would also serve a very important and practical function by providing weather protection for pedestrians.



An artist's impression of The Strand side of the proposed redevelopment.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION UNDER REVIEW

The Whakatāne District Council has begun a review of its strategic direction as a lead-in to the development of its next Long Term Plan (LTP) in 2015.

Mayor Tony Bonne says the 2015-25 LTP will establish the path and priorities for the development of the Council's infrastructure assets, services and activities, including economic development initiatives.

"As we've just commenced a new triennium with some new Councillors, we thought it would be appropriate to start by reflecting on our vision for the Whakatāne District and the direction we need to take to achieve Councillors' and the community's aspirations," he says. "As part of that process, Council elected members and senior staff held a two-day strategic planning forum last week, which provided an opportunity for Councillors to express their personal views about the things we need to change, keep doing, or do better in future."

He says there was a clear consensus that the Council wishes to see economic development driven further and faster. "In recent months, we've taken a number of proactive decisions flowing from the Grow Whakatāne action plan which are designed to add some real momentum to economic development. We want a vibrant community

where more people choose to live, work and play. Key measures of success will be a District that is safe and engaged; where businesses and innovation thrive; and where promoting the enjoyment of a quality and affordable lifestyle is part of everything Council does."

Other focuses include:

- Affordable Council services and rates;
- Resilient infrastructure – such as roads, water supplies and stormwater and wastewater systems – which meets the community's needs and, as far as possible, will withstand natural hazard impacts; and
- Clear and simple policies and processes, empowering staff to make quick, common-sense decisions and reduce barriers to investment and development.

"We also have some personal goals around effective leadership which is both incisive and responsive, making decisions with and for the community in a transparent and inclusive way," Mayor Bonne concludes. "We look forward to building the strong and enduring partnerships that will help us make the 2015-25 LTP an effective blueprint for the future."

## SUMMER DAZE DRAWS TO A CLOSE

After more than two months of successful trading, the Whakatāne Student Business Challenge's store on the Strand has closed as its young entrepreneurs have gone back to school.

Summer Daze, which opened its doors on 1 December 2013 at 136 The Strand, gave local students the opportunity for some first-hand experience of running a business in premises provided free of charge by the Whakatāne District Council.

Three groups of students took up the challenge: Sweet Little Things served up fresh, home-made cupcakes, INC sold original skateboards and clothing designs, and Low Cool operated as a sports club retail store, supported by the Paroa Rugby and Sport Club.

Lily Wellauer of Low Cool said the experience had been exciting but also very challenging. "It was great getting to know aspects of business that you never see when you are just shopping," she said. "It was a lot of hard work, but we had great feedback



Lily Wellauer (left), Nicola Strydom and Maria Tomaszewski at the Summer Daze store.

from our customers and great support from the public and local news media."

Nicola Strydom and Maria Tomaszewski of Sweet Little Things also said they had gained valuable experience from the store, with the former noting that all the hard work had been worth it to make customers happy, and the latter adding that they would definitely do it all again, despite the long hours involved.

All three students thanked their families and supporters, and also Rhys Mischefski and the Whakatāne District Council for offering them the opportunity.

## AQUATIC CENTRE POPULARITY ON THE RISE

Eighteen months after the Whakatāne District Council took over the management of the town's Aquatic Centre, significant improvements have been seen in both attendance and the community's perception of the facility.



Baby swimming class (above) and Aqua Fitness (below) at the Aquatic Centre.

In a report to the Council's Projects and Services Committee last week, it was noted that since the beginning of July 2013, general admissions had risen 32 percent compared to the previous year, while Fitness Centre membership in January 2014 was 22 percent higher than at the same time in 2013. Swim school enrolments for Term 4 of 2013 were also 13 percent higher than for Term 4 of the previous year.

The report noted that while those figures indicated an improved service level for customers, the increase in revenue generated also meant potential savings for ratepayers.

Council Community Services Manager Paula Chapman said the figures were a reflection of just how much the community was engaging with the Centre. "The number of people taking part in programmes is very encouraging. The community connection with this facility is really growing and that is exactly what we were aiming for."

Recent initiatives to improve service at the Centre have included a restructure of the Learn to Swim programme, the introduction of Learn to Swim classes on weekends, and the launch of adult swim clinics.

Mrs Chapman said there had also been considerable investment in the maintenance and upgrading of the facility and the completion of that work was expected to be reflected in further improvements in the Centre's financial results in the 2014/15 financial year.



## CHILD RESTRAINT MESSAGES ARE GETTING THROUGH

The latest car seat checkpoints in Ōpōtiki show child restraint messages are getting through to the community.

Of the 73 children checked on 17 February, 37 percent were correctly restrained. This figure shows that work around restraints awareness is paying off; checks done in the town last November showed just 23 percent of children were properly strapped in.

"These numbers prove the Ōpōtiki community is gaining a better understanding of the importance of child restraints," Whakatāne District Council community development advisor Erena Brew says. "It is good to see an improvement in Ōpōtiki, and we will continue to work towards the goal of all Eastern Bay children being correctly restrained when in the car."



Correctly restrained means there must be no problems with the way the car seat is attached to the car or with how the child is strapped into the car seat. Common faults include twisted or loose harness straps, no tether bolt and a seat type that doesn't suit the child's age or weight.

Child restraints that are installed and used correctly significantly reduce the risk of children being injured in a car accident.

They reduce the risk of death for babies and toddlers by at least 54 percent, and hospital visits by 69 percent. For older children the risk of hospitalisation and death is reduced by up to 59 percent.

Children under seven must be in approved child restraints or booster seats, and children aged 7-8 should be in an approved child restraint. Plunket, Eastern Bay Police, the Eastern Bay Road Safety Programme and the Bay of Plenty Regional Council continue to highlight this message.

For advice on fitting a car seat or to check yours is still being used correctly, contact Ōpōtiki Plunket community support co-ordinator Rachel Wilson on 07 315 6282.