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Atihau back in profit P2

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HMW uses last 2025 meeting to halve rates impact

Horizons Regional Council used its last meeting of 2025 to make decisions to reduce the next proposed average rates increase and “continue to protect the economy and the environment from possums”.

Council made a series of decisions at a meeting on Tuesday 16 December:

- Signal an intention to work towards an average rates increase of between 4.6% and 4.9% in the 2026/27 financial year.
- Provide funding to ensure school buses between Ashhurst and Palmerston North continue to run.
- Pause work on the proposed new building to replace Palmerston North Regional House.

Horizons chair Nikki Riley says the proposed average rates increase for the 2026/27 financial year was about 10% before the meeting.

“The new Council knew the pace of rates increases was unsustainable and have acted quickly after October’s local government elections to do something about it.

“While work to bring this figure down was underway before central government’s proposals for local government reform and rates capping were announced, this direction of travel aligns Horizons with central government’s desire for councils to move towards the proposed rates cap band.”

The new signalled rates increase would allow for the following:

- Improvements to the Whanganui public transport

Turn to Page 3

Nanny and Billy finish The Goat



Fastest ‘billy’ Jackson Cole and fastest ‘nanny’ Maia Flint at the finish line for The Goat trail run on Saturday. Photo: Photos4sale.co.nz.

Jackson Cole was the fastest “billy goat” and Maia Flint was the fastest “nanny” in Saturday’s successful trail run, The Goat, organised by Ohakune Events Charitable Trust.

Cole completed the run on the Round the Mountain track from Whakapapa to Tūroa in 2 hours 4 minutes and 51 seconds.

Flint finished in 2:18:16 and was fourth overall.

The fastest local home was Ben Swift, from Ohakune, in 2:31:22, winning the Hamish Har-

land Memorial Trophy.

There were than 50 locals taking on the challenge – well up on previous years when almost all participants have been from out of the District.

As well as the ‘goats’, there were also 96 entries for The Kid run, on the 3.2km Mangawhero Forest bush track – around 20 more than last year.

Of the 405 ‘goats’ there were also a number of internationals, from Australia, Canada, South

Africa, Germany, France and the UK.

There was a slight change in the course this year, with an extra 50 metres added at the Tūroa Ski Area base, with runners having to climb the stairs to the Plaza area.

Event co-ordinator Jaye Lowe said there were a few grumbles from some competitors, but it meant that the finish was in a more sheltered area amongst the base buildings and they could set out the stalls and picnic tables around the finish

Turn to Page 12

The

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Fire destroys Raetihi garage, vintage vehicles



A garage at a Pitt Street, Raetihi, property was destroyed by fire on Friday evening, along with two vintage vehicles stored inside. They were believed to be a Morris Minor ute and a vintage fire appliance. Despite the intensity of the blaze, firefighters from the Raetihi, Ohakune and Waiouru brigades were able to save the surrounding buildings from damage. Photo: Liz Brooker.

Ruapehu Events & What's On

JANUARY 2026

Mahi Aroha - DoC Summer Programme 1 - 30 January
For further information: www.tongariro.org.nz.

The Goat Adventure Run 17 January
Have you Goat what it take? www.thegoat.co.nz

FEBRUARY 2026

Waimarino A&P Show 21 February
For further information contact: info@waimarinoshow.com.

Waimarino Sheepdog Trials 27-28 February
Contact Secretary – Roger Suckling 027 897 1610.

MARCH 2026

Blazing Hills Trail Run/Walk 14 March
Contact www.blazinghills.nz.

Waimarino 103rd Rodeo 21-22 March
Secretary: Cathy MacLean 06 385 4636 or 027 240 1090. Email: c_d_maclean@xtra.co.nz. Raetihi Rodeo Grounds, Parapara Highway

Ring of Fire 27-28 March
See www.rof.co.nz for more information

Tussock Traverse 28 March
See www.tussocktraverse.co.nz for more information

Raetihi Wild Food Challenge 28 March
For more information email: localwildfoodchallenge@gmail.com

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Ātiahau Whanganui returns to profit as new governors join board

By Moana Ellis, Local Democracy Reporting

One of the country's largest farming operations has returned to profit with a \$9.7 million after-tax surplus, reversing two consecutive loss-making years.

The Māori-owned Ātiahau-Whanganui Incorporation has more than 9000 shareholders and 42,000 hectares of ancestral land under management from Ohakune to Whanganui, including eight sheep and beef stations, a dairy farm, forestry and beehives.

Its shareholders are descendants of the original owners, who belonged to Te Ātihaunui-a-Pāpārangi and Whanganui iwi.

Shar Amner has been re-elected to the board, with Jonelle Hiroti-Kinane and Hayden Potaka joining as new governors, following the incorporation's annual general meeting in Whanganui in December.

Three of the seven board members stood down under the board's rotation policy, including long-serving governor Whatarangi Murphy-Peehi, who did not seek re-election after serving 41 years.

Amner, Hiroti-Kinane and Potaka were selected from a field of eight candidates. They join Dr Rawiri Tinirau, Hamish Blackburn, Kemp Dryden and Keria Ponga for the next term.

Stabilisation

In his chair's report for the year ended 30 June 2025, Amner said the incorporation had returned from a period of "stabilisation to performance", turning two years of losses into profit.

Net profit after tax shifted from losses of \$6.7 million in 2023 and \$5.7 million in 2024 to a \$9.7 million profit.

An operating profit of \$0.8 million was also reported, compared with a \$1.3 million operating loss in 2024.

Amner said the turnaround had been achieved "through discipline" and during a period of leadership transition.

The incorporation reduced debt by 25 percent (\$10 million) through sales of honey and carbon credits, and more than doubled its dividend to shareholders from 28 cents in



Ātiahau-Whanganui Incorporation chair Shar Amner reported a \$9.7 million profit, 25 percent debt reduction and a doubled dividend to shareholders. Photo: Liz Brooker.

2024 to 60 cents.

Amner said the year had been turbulent, but the incorporation's response had been measured and deliberate.

"We have undertaken fundamental structural reforms while honouring the vision our tūpuna established for their mokopuna."

The board consolidated its strategic focus from seven priorities to three: farm performance and productivity, strategic partnerships and relationships, and data-driven decision-making.

"This restructuring reflects a fundamental shift from broad aspiration to targeted execution."

Realities

Amner said market realities continued to shape results.

"Operating in global commodity markets exposes us to volatility we cannot control. Yet our scale brings resilience and responsibility.

"While market fluctuations affect all agricultural enterprises, our institutional stability and operational diversification position us to weather these cycles more effectively than smaller operators."

Livestock prices were strong for both meat and milk, while wool also showed signs of recovery, improving the economics of shearing.

Spring production saw 86,359 lambs and 3790 calves born, with 58,832 lambs sold. Milk production resulted in sales of 279,423kg of milk solids, averaging 436kg per cow.

Honey production showed long-awaited signs of recovery for the incorporation's AWHI Mīere apiary business, with 56,500kg of mānuka honey extracted alongside 23,000kg of native bush honey retained for hive feeding. More than 148,000kg of honey stock was sold.

The board increased its distribution to the incorporation's charitable arm, Te Āti Hau Trust, from \$250,000 in 2024 to

\$325,000.

The trust supports shareholders and their descendants through kaumātua, education and marae grants.

Te Āti Hau Trust chair Dr Rawiri Tinirau said that despite the reduced distribution from the incorporation for the year to the end of June, the trust was able to distribute more than \$362,000 in 527 general and education scholarships and grants.

This included 210 kaumātua health and wellbeing grants totalling \$166,000, \$105,000 in 175 education grants, \$45,000 in marae grants, and tangihanga grants for wharemate.

"We have seen a steady increase in applications from kaumātua seeking support with healthcare costs, particularly in key areas such as dental care, optical services and hearing aids," Tinirau said.

Amner told Local Democracy Reporting the incorporation was well positioned for the future, with recently appointed chief executive John Taterere ready to lead the next phase of growth.

LDR is local body journalism co-funded by RNZ and NZ On Air



Recently appointed chief executive John Taterere. Photo: Liz Brooker.



Retiring governor Whatarangi Murphy-Peehi is presented with a pounamu patu in recognition of 41 years of service. Photo: Liz Brooker.

Triple-whammy storm leaves Ruapehu facing multi-year repairs

Severe weather in June, July and October have left Ruapehu District Council facing a multi-million-dollar repair bill across its roading network, with works expected to take several years to complete.

Damage ranges from minor surface issues to major slips and road dropouts, with some areas temporarily isolated. Around 1000 sites across the district have been affected.

Ruapehu District Council land transport manager Jodeci Waru-Savage said the three events caused an estimated \$10 million to \$14 million in damage.

“Our contractors and local communities did an outstanding job restoring access and addressing safety issues in the immediate aftermath of the October event,” Waru-Savage said.

“Many sites remain vulnerable, however, and full reinstatement is now underway to restore long-term resilience and reliability.”

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency emergency funding arrangements allow the council to prioritise urgent remedial works, but permanent repairs often require full engineering assessments and detailed costings.

“These processes take time, and we appreciate people’s patience as we work through the necessary steps to ensure repairs are done properly and at the lowest possible cost to ratepayers,” Waru-Savage said.

To make the most of the limited summer construction season, more contractors are being brought in to support the council’s main contractor, Inframax. Sites are being grouped into work packages based on location, repair type and contractor expertise to improve efficiency and reduce traffic management costs.

Ratepayers are benefiting from NZTA emergency works funding, which significantly reduces the council’s share of repair costs.

The June and July events alone caused about \$4.2 million in emergency works damage, with the council’s share estimated at \$1.2 million across the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years.

Under normal conditions, NZTA funds 75 percent of eligible roading costs. When emergency works exceed 10 percent of the council’s annual land transport operational budget, the funding assistance rate increases to 95 percent, leaving ratepayers to cover just five percent.

A handful of sites from the August 2024 weather event, and about 75 percent of the June and July emergency works, are expected to be completed this financial year, with the remainder finished in 2026/27.

The October weather event triggered more than 350 callouts and caused substantial damage on more than 30 roads.

Early estimates suggest between \$8 million and \$10 million will be needed to repair about 420 sites, with works expected to take two to three years depending on contractor availability, design requirements and weather conditions.

Some sites are expected to take more than a week to repair, with motorists likely to encounter stop/go controls or diversions.

Affected roads are in the north of the District and include Kururau Rd, Makokomiko Rd, Ohura-Mokau Rd, Ohura Rd, Oio Rd, Okahukura Bridge Rd, Otunui South Rd, Pukeatua Rd, Saddler Rd, Taringamotu Rd, Uepango Rd, Viles Access Rd and Whanganui River Rd.

Over summer, the council is asking drivers to slow down, take extra care and follow all instructions at work sites to help keep crews and road users safe.

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Fixing all damaged road sites from the October event is expected to take two-three years depending on contractor availability, design requirements, and the weather.



Fixing all damaged road sites from the October event is expected to take two-three years depending on contractor availability, design requirements, and the weather.

HMW uses last 2025 meeting to halve rates impact

From Page 1

network as consulted on and decided as part of the 2025/26 Annual Plan process.

- More possum control to cover areas no longer served by OSPRI.
- Funding for Ashhurst school bus services.
- Contracted inflationary costs.
- Changes to KiwiSaver contributions.
- Depreciation.

“We have halved the signalled average rates increase, while still managing to save Ashhurst’s school buses and keep the pressure on possum populations,” says Cr Riley.

Bringing down the signalled rates increase means a range of proposed new roles will not be filled; no additional work programmed for policy, science and biodiversity; the delay of a proposed new regional public transport service and proposed new Horowhenua public transport service; and the removal of an insurance premium increase, says Cr Riley.

“If we wanted to make further savings, we would have had to look at reducing our current levels of service.”

The average rates increase will be different across districts due to different levels of service and rating revaluations, says Cr Riley.

“Whanganui urban areas will see the biggest rating increase due to additional flood protection

work related to Te Pūwaha – the port revitalisation project – and the public transport improvements. Those projects were signed off earlier this year as part of the 2025/26 Annual Plan process.

“Full confirmed figures will be available closer to when the next Annual Plan is signed off next year.”

Council is aware of the wider context of reforms proposed by central government, including rates capping, resource management changes and regional governance restructure, says Cr Riley.

“This is why we have pushed pause on the proposed new build project. We cannot proceed with this until we have more certainty on the proposed reforms.”

The reform programme from central government will keep Horizons busy throughout 2026, says Cr Riley.

“We are still looking at exactly what resources we will need to implement the reform programme, as this could impact the final average rates increase.

“We will be working with other councils across the region during this period of reform, and with central government, to ensure we get the best possible results for those who live in the region.

“We want to be a collaborative partner with all stakeholders to ensure we protect our environment, enhance our economy and enable our communities to be the best they can be.”

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Letters

Emergency waste

• Another example as to how our Council wastes money happened just before Christmas.

The Council, through the postal system sent a pamphlet outlining the “Emergency Works Update”

They said that the estimate to repair the damage was between \$8-14 million dollars.

This to me shows that the Council has no clue how to accurately cost the damage repairs needed.

In addition to this, why did the Council spend ratepayers’ money to advise us of this useless information when it could have been reported as a news item in the local papers?

In actual fact, it was front page headline news in the *Whanganui Chronicle*.

All I ask is that the Council think before they waste any more of our money

Phillip Harvey

Editor’s note: the *Ruapehu Bulletin* also ran a front page article on the matter (17 December 2025).

Ruapehu District Council replies

• The flyer was developed as part of Council’s civil defence recovery communications following the series of severe weather events in June, July, and October last year.

It was specifically targeted at rural communities to provide an update on the status of local road repairs and the challenges involved in restoring the network after these events, which caused widespread damage and resulted in a multi-million-dollar, multi-year repair programme.

Given the critical importance of land transport infrastructure to rural communities, those communities asked to be kept informed about progress and constraints affecting the repair programme.

The use of the rural delivery service was agreed with the Rural Support Trust as an effective and appropriate way to reach rural residents directly. The information was also distributed via a media release and on social media as we use all channels to achieve effective reach.

The estimated \$8 million to \$14 million in damage refers to the cost of repairing approximately 1000 sites across the District affected by the three weather events. As noted in the flyer, the cost range reflects the fact that damage from the October event is still being assessed.

While Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency emergency funding allows Council to prioritise urgent

remedial works, permanent long-term repairs require full engineering assessments, geotechnical investigations, and detailed costings, all of which must be approved by Waka Kotahi.

Ruapehu ratepayers can have confidence that Council’s land transport team follows a robust and disciplined process to accurately scope, design, and cost repair works.

Feedback from rural communities indicates the flyer and the information provided were welcomed and appreciated.

It should also be noted that the flyer was produced in-house at minimal cost.

Vini Dutra, RDC infrastructure manager

Auckland amalgamation didn’t save money

• When Auckland became a supercity in 2010, the rest of the country was told to watch closely. Merge eight councils into one, we were told, and the savings would be huge. The Royal Commission promised \$76–\$113 million a year in efficiencies. It was sold as modern, streamlined and inevitable. Fifteen years later, the numbers tell a different story.

Those savings never arrived. Independent reviews have been clear: the efficiencies used to justify amalgamation did not materialise. Instead, Auckland ended up with a bigger bureaucracy, more layers of governance, and a set of council-controlled organisations that sit further from the public than the councils they replaced.

But one group did very well out of the whole exercise: consultants.

Since amalgamation, Auckland Council and its CCOs have relied heavily on external advisers for restructuring, operating models, governance reviews, and transformation programmes. PwC, Deloitte, EY, KPMG — the list is long. The supercity didn’t eliminate duplication; it outsourced it.

This matters for rural New Zealand because we are now hearing the same arguments again: too many councils, too much duplication, not enough scale. The implication is that bigger councils are automatically more efficient.

Auckland’s experience shows the opposite.

When you centralise decision-making, you don’t just lose local voice — you lose local knowledge. Rural roads, rural water systems, rural emergency response, rural land use: these are not abstract policy areas. They are lived realities. They require people who know the place, not people who know the model.

And once a council becomes too large and complex to manage internally, it becomes dependent on

consultants. That’s not a criticism of the individuals involved — it’s a structural consequence of scale. Complexity creates capability gaps, and capability gaps create consultancy contracts.

Meanwhile, the savings Auckland now reports — \$30 million here, \$60 million there — are operational savings, not structural ones. They come from procurement changes and vacancy freezes, not from amalgamation. If the promised efficiencies had been real, Auckland wouldn’t need to chase tens of millions in savings every year just to stay afloat.

Before Wellington reaches for the map and scissors again, rural New Zealand should insist on one thing: evidence. Not modelling. Not theory. Evidence.

Auckland didn’t get the savings it was promised. But the consultancy sector did. That alone should make every rural community pause before accepting that “bigger is better”.

John Chapman

A hot, wet summer

• 2026 has got off to a beautiful start with the ever-warming oceans surrounding us having sent us plentiful rains and warm winds that have combined to give abundant growth on all our lands. Of course, this has also created a larger-than-usual fire load in our district, and when the hot, dry season arrives, things will get interesting.

Alternatively, the extra-hot tropical waters to the north of us are now far more likely to send us fire-drowning deluges. But these will, alas, also do more expensive damage to our roads and hill farms.

Our district council is already \$60-to-70 million in debt and penny-pinching ratepayers have voted in a mayor who has promised not to raise rates, while self-serving government MPs who already own nearly 200 properties are passing a law to reduce the council rates that property-owners already pay.

So it will be very interesting to see how the RDC reduces our district’s debt while dealing with the likelihood of extra costs for coping with fires and/or floods.

I have been up Te Ara Mangawhero almost every day recently and the good news is that our new Mangawhero bike trail has been a bit like the Auckland motorway at times, bringing lots more money into our district. But extra growth from our hot, wet summer has reduced the 2-metre-wide trail to just a few centimetres in many places, so a couple of working-bees with cutters and rakes (then barbies and beers?) would be a big help to Lynley Twyman and her team.

John Archer

Inside iwi’s two-week Whanganui River journey

From Page 5

history of the awa. We learn skills. We’re not just looking at the awa but we’re on the awa, in the awa, talking to the awa – all those beautiful things.

“They’ve managed to maintain something so special, that is truly Whanganui. But also if you were to look globally, it’s an ingenious strategy to maintain that indigeneity.”

Long-serving steerer Hone Turu said the awa was a living reminder of those who had gone before him, including his late father John Wi who travelled with crews of whānau and rangatahi from his hapū Te Ihingarangi.

“Every corner, every rapid, every kōrero that I give to the next generation, I think of Dad, I think of Uncle Paik [Paiki Johnson], I think of all the people that helped us to get those kōrero out there: Uncle Gerald Patea, some of our old fellas like Uncle Boy [Cribb] and Uncle Baldy [Haitana].

“It’s built me up to who I am today. If I didn’t have that, I’d probably be like every other haututū Māori in the world. It grounded me to where I am and who I am today. I feel the next generation should learn the same as my father and grandfather taught us – whakapapa and whaikōrero. That’s what the Tira’s all about.

“It’s one of those golden opportunities for our people, Whanganui people, to understand who they are and how they fit in the whole scheme of things.”

Potaka said the Tira Hoe Waka was only possible because of the immense support of hapū along the river, who prepare and host the Tira at each marae every year.

“Their manaakitanga, organisation and aroha are the backbone of this journey, and we are deeply grateful.”

LDR is local body journalism co-funded by RNZ and NZ On Air

THE WEEKLY WORKOUT

answers for each puzzle are included on this page

833

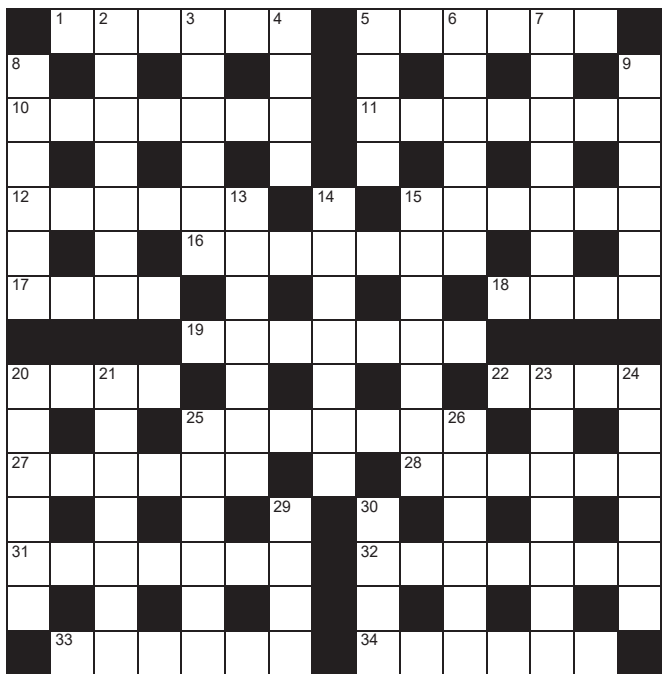
QUICK CROSSWORD

Across

- 1. Spiny tree or shrub (6)
- 5. Stew (6)
- 10. Romantic (7)
- 11. Indian rice dish (7)
- 12. Marksman (6)
- 15. Social outcast (6)
- 16. Current (7)
- 17. Long tale (4)
- 18. One of these (4)
- 19. Defile (7)
- 20. Gamble (4)
- 22. Ding (4)
- 25. Restricted (7)
- 27. Madman (6)
- 28. Stay (6)
- 31. Embrace tightly (7)
- 32. Allocation (7)
- 33. Scram! (4,2)
- 34. Pierce (6)

Down

- 2. Preparing food (7)
- 3. Wardrobe (6)
- 4. As well (4)
- 5. Infant (4)
- 6. Antenna (6)
- 7. Blindly imitative (7)
- 8. Overtakes (6)
- 9. Entitlements (6)
- 13. Mechanical (7)
- 14. Bad guy (7)



- 15. Big cat (7)
- 20. Downfall (6)
- 21. Eat (7)
- 23. Inspect (7)
- 24. Renter (6)
- 25. Mourn (6)
- 26. Edict (6)
- 29. Accomplishment (4)
- 30. Musical composition (4)

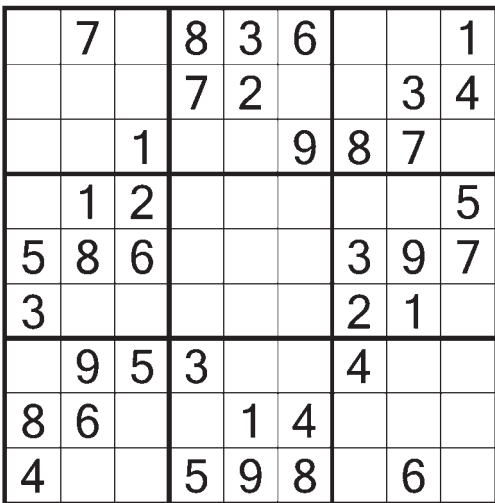
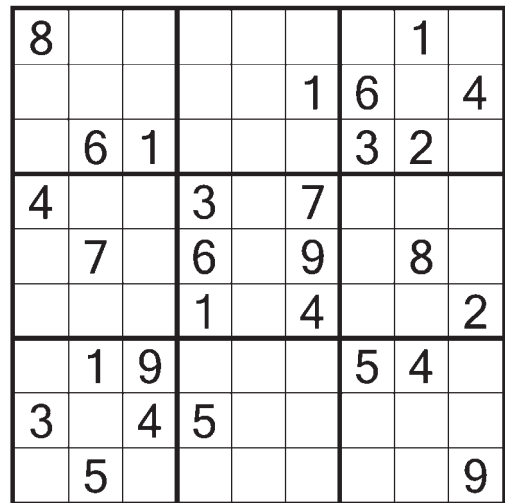


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SUDOKU

Fill the grid so every row, column and every 3x3 box contains 1-9



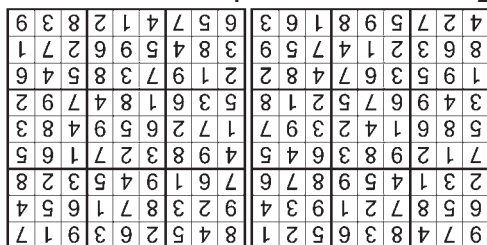
The Top 10

- 1. Which group had a 1981 hit with *Vienna*?
- 2. Where was Superman born?
- 3. Mogadishu is the capital of which country?
- 4. What is New Zealand’s only native mammal?
- 5. Who wrote *The Poseidon Adventure*?
- 6. *Dance All Around The World* was a hit for which musical and theatrical group in 1972?
- 7. In the early 1980s, which car maker produced a futuristic car with gull-wing doors?
- 8. Which actor found fame trying to resist the charms of Mrs Robinson in *The Graduate*?
- 9. In 1992, Annelise Coberger became the first New Zealander to do what?
- 10. In Greek mythology, who was the first woman?

CROSSWORD

25. Lament, 26. Decree, 29. Feat, 30. Opus.
21. Consume, 24. Tenant.
Robotic, 14. Villain, 15. Panther, 20. Demise, 6. Aerial, 7. Slavish, 8. Passes, 9. Rights, 13. Down: 2. Cooking, 3. Closet, 4. Also, 5. Baby, 34. Skewer.
31. Squeeze, 32. Portion, 33. Beat it.
Dent, 25. Limited, 27. Maniac, 28. Remain, 17. Saga, 18. This, 19. Pollute, 20. Dice, 22. 11. Biryani, 12. Sniper, 15. Pariah, 16. Topical, Across: 1. Acacia, 5. Braise, 10. Amorous.

SUDOKU



THE TOP 10

- 10 Pandora.
- Hoffman, 9 Win a medal at the Winter Olympics, Gallico, 6 Bruno Lawrence, 7 De Lorean, 8 Dustin
- 1 Ultravox, 2 Krypton, 3 Somalia, 4 Bat, 5 Paul

4 • RUAPEHU BULLETIN 21 January 2026

RUAPEHU BULLETIN 21 January 2026 • 5

Did you know?

Outages



It's 11pm when a car hits a pole in Te Kūiti. 1,200 people lose power.

At The Lines Company, 3 staff in the office coordinate a team of 11 in the field to restore power as quickly as possible.

In less than an hour, power is restored to 97% of the people affected.



10%

of our staff work actively through the night

How we respond to an unplanned outage

93%

of unplanned outages resolved within 1 hour

15,000

man-hours spent responding to faults in the last year

8,000

man-hours spent responding to faults at night in the last year

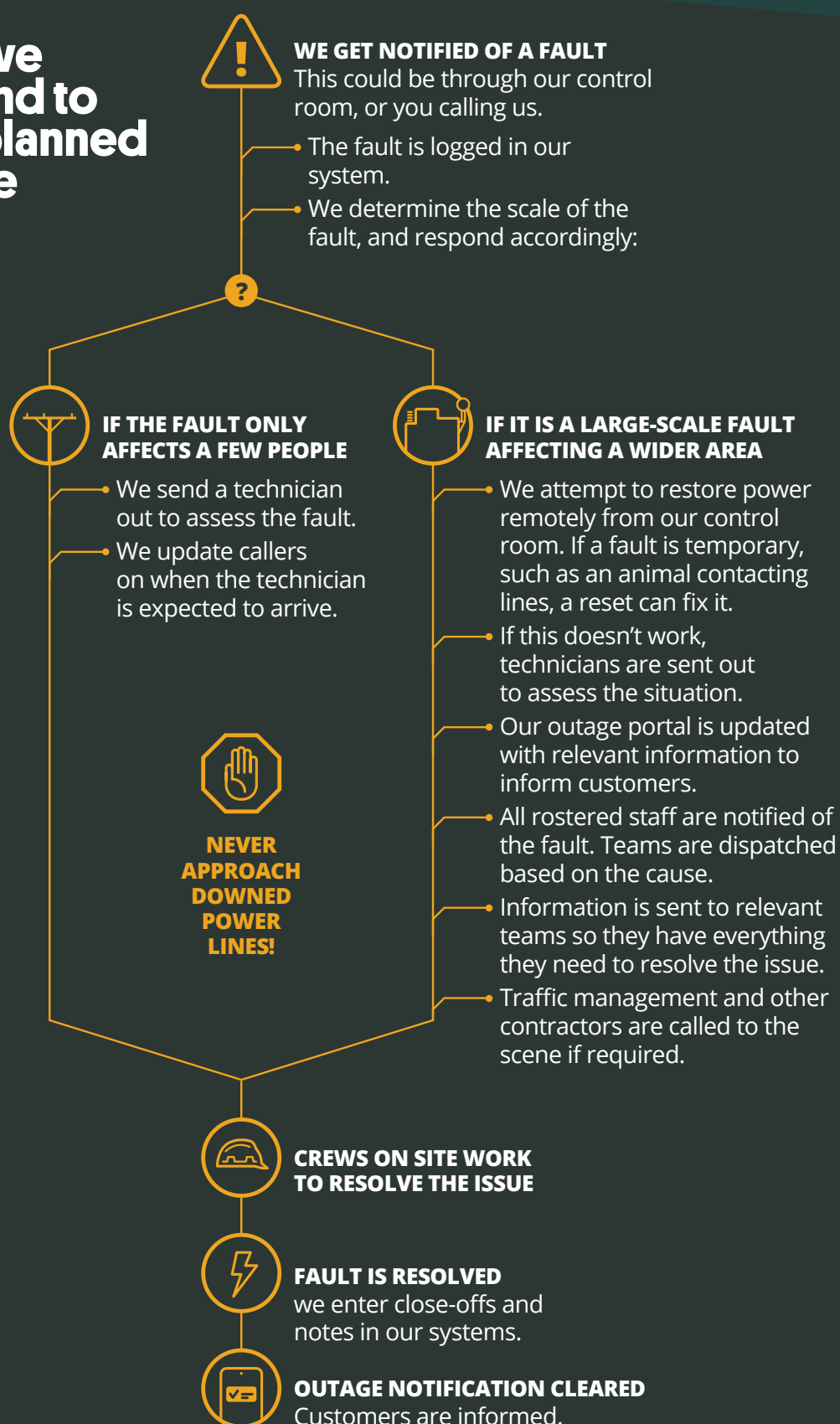
WHAT CAUSES UNPLANNED OUTAGES?

- Car accidents
- Weather events
- Trees touching or falling on lines
- Animal interference
- Equipment failure

WHY DO WE HAVE PLANNED OUTAGES?

Sometimes we need to turn power off to safely work on the network for reasons such as

- Connecting new customers
- Replacing poles
- Line maintenance
- Trimming or removing trees
- Substation maintenance



Ruapehu boost from international tourism collaboration

Ruapehu is set to benefit from the government’s Regional Tourism Boost Fund – Round Two, announced in Taupō recently, as the region works closely alongside neighbouring Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) to attract more international visitors to the central North Island and beyond.

While Ruapehu is not the lead agency for the successful funding bids, says Jo Kennedy, general manager, Visit Ruapehu is an active delivery partner, collaborating with surrounding regions to ensure Ruapehu’s experiences, trails and hospitality offerings are well represented in offshore markets, particularly Australia and the United States.

The funding round specifically encouraged regional collaboration, a model that Ruapehu and its neighbouring RTOs have strongly embraced. Lead RTOs are coordinating activity on behalf of wider regions, with Ruapehu contributing product, insight and market-ready experiences to each initiative.

Minister of Tourism Louise Upston has expressed strong support for the collaborative approach being taken, noting early positive signs of increased visitation and welcoming the strengthened partnerships forming between RTOs.

“Visitors don’t experience regions in isolation. Working together allows us

to showcase the full journey and inspire visitors to travel further, stay longer and do more,” said Jo Kennedy.

“We’re grateful to our neighbouring RTOs — Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, RotoruaNZ, Hamilton & Waikato Tourism and Destination Great Lake Taupō — for leading these campaigns and for their strong spirit of regional collaboration.”

Initiatives

Key initiatives Ruapehu is contributing to include:

- \$1.2 million North American campaign encouraging visitors from the USA and Canada to explore all corners of New Zealand, led by Tātaki Auckland Unlimited. Ruapehu is contributing product and regional storytelling to ensure central North Island experiences are included.

- \$600,000 cycling-focused initiative aimed at Australian visitors, promoting Ngā Haerenga Great Rides of New Zealand and led by Destination Great Lake Taupō. Ruapehu will work closely with Taupō to ensure flagship trails such as Timber Trail and Mountains to Sea - Ngā Ara Tūhono Trail are strongly represented.

- \$459,000 international marketing initiative promoting travel via nonstop Jetstar flights from Sydney and the Gold Coast into Hamilton Airport, led by Hamilton & Waikato Tourism, with Ruapehu, Taupō and Taranaki collaborating to convert ar-



Louise Upston, Minister for Tourism – second from right, with Visit Ruapehu staff Catherine Pakai-Dewes, left, Jo Kennedy and Lynley Twyman, Mountains to Sea - Ngā Ara Tūhono Trail champion. Photo: Visit Ruapehu.

rivals into extended stays across the wider central North Island.

- \$2.5 million “Kiwi North” campaign, announced last year, focusing on attracting visitors from Australia’s eastern seaboard between November 2025 and July 2026, delivered through a partnership of 15 North Island Regional Tourism Organisations.

“Together, these initiatives support increased inter-

national visitation, longer stays, and greater hospitality spend, while reinforcing Ruapehu’s position as a must-visit destination within the central North Island journey,” says Kennedy.

Visit Ruapehu acknowledges the Government for its investment through the Tourism Boost funding programme and for its commitment to supporting regional collaboration to grow international visitation and hospitality spend.

RDC is a ‘low risk building consent authority’

Ruapehu District Council is celebrating its building control team being reassessed as a ‘low risk’ Building Consent Authority (BCA).

The assessment, conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), ensures that councils meet rigorous standards to deliver trusted, legally compliant building control services.

Executive manager - regulatory & customer services Sharon Robinson praised the building control team for their hard work and dedication.

“We are thrilled that the 2025 assessment has validated the building team’s on-going commitment to maintaining high standards and this vital accreditation for the community.

“The assessment as a ‘low risk’ BCA is especially rewarding for the building control team as it reconfirms their capability and consistency in delivering building control functions,” she said.

Robinson noted that the leadership of Building Control manager Darryn Cosford

was critical to the team maintaining its low risk assessment.

“Last year Council was required to undertake a special accreditation assessment to check on progress in addressing non-compliances identified during an earlier 2023 assessment.

Cosford oversaw the performance improvements that reestablished Council as a low-risk BCA.

Being assessed as a low-risk BCA confirms that the improvements in the team’s performance have been effectively maintained,” she said.

Cosford expressed pride in the team’s professionalism and the positive feedback received.

“It was especially pleasing to hear from the assessors that they recognised the team’s and Council’s commitment to supporting and implementing our systems.

“We are committed to maintaining our low-risk BCA accreditation and ensuring construction compliance in Ruapehu,” he said.



Ruapehu District Council’s building control team has been reassessed as a ‘low risk’ Building Consent Authority (BCA) reconfirming their capability and consistency in delivering building control functions. From left, Chris Dassen - McKenzie Builders foreman with Darryn Cosford - building control manager and Kowhai Te Manu - building control administrator. Photo: RDC.

Pouri Hut fire a summer safety reminder

Pouri Hut in Whanganui National Park has been destroyed by a fire, prompting a warning to visitors to bring their own shelter and water.

On 11 December a fire broke out in the 12-bunk hut, which provides a critical link on the Matemateāonga Track. The fire razed the hut completely. No-one was in the hut at the time and the fire did not extend to the surrounding forest.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand investigators were unable to determine a cause, but have ruled out the wood burner, gas bottle and cooker. Visitors who had left the hut in the morning saw no signs of fire.

DOC principal ranger heritage and visitors Joshua Kilmister says the fire presents a reminder to practice safe fire management this summer.

“We don’t know exactly what caused this fire, but with the dry conditions we’re experiencing, it’s a reminder to all of us to be careful storing fuel, disposing of ashes, and using fire.

“This is also a perfect time to check any charging equipment, batteries and power banks you travel with to ensure they are in good, safe condition.”

Fire and Emergency New Zealand cau-

tions damaged or incorrectly used batteries can pose a fire risk both at home and when travelling.

Joshua says Pouri Hut, built in the 1970s, was critical for biodiversity work in Whanganui National Park and its loss will be felt.

“We’ll be working with partners ... to see how we can replace this. We’re a bit gutted to be honest, especially after the work Backcountry Trust has put in to support us with this hut.

Backcountry Trust Manager Rob Brown says he’s always disappointed to see this sort of thing happen.

“The Backcountry Trust, along with other groups like the Greater Wellington Backcountry Network, have put a lot of time and effort into the Matemateāonga Track in the last few years, and I really feel for the DOC team as well – we’ve all been quite invested in this special part of Whanganui National Park,” says Rob.

“Hopefully we’ll find a way forward in the new year, we’re always ready to play our part for ensuring these places are maintained for future generations.”

Any visitors planning on naturing in the area should bring their own shelter and water, as these are not currently available at Pouri Hut.



What little remains of Pouri Hut on the Matemateāonga Track in the Whanganui National Park – the cause of the fire is unknown. Photo: DOC.

Central North Island high on summer lists

New Zealanders are into another summer of naturing, based on a newly released DOC report – and the central North Island is high on many lists.

Frequently visited spots include Tongariro National Park, Huka Falls in Taupō, and the Bridge to Nowhere in Whanganui National Park.

Short walks and accessible locations are favourites for kiwis looking to make the most of the warmer weather.

DOC Central North Island acting director Sandy Woodhead says the report shows people want to pack a lot of nature and heritage into short visits.

“We’re seeing people enjoying beautiful short walks, keeping it simple and affordable, especially as we’ve all been facing a tough year,” says Sandy.

Domestic visits to protected natural areas dipped slightly over the past year, something the report links to storm events, slips, road closures and the cost of living.

Sandy says despite this, people are still keen to get outdoors.

“Central North Island has so many beautiful locations and experiences on offer, you can find all of these on our website to plan your summer naturing.”

International visitation has now rebounded to more than 90 percent of pre-Covid levels. Beaches and national parks remain the backbone of the international itinerary, with 57 percent

visiting a beach and 52 percent visiting a national park and 72 percent heading out for a walk.

Tongariro National Park is the third-biggest drawcard for international visitors, with its world-famous Tongariro Alpine Crossing and Dual World Heritage listing for its cultural and ecological values.

Sandy says even after the devastating fires of November and early December, the park is a popular destination.

“It’s iconic, but we do want people to know it’s more than just the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, there are many incredible experiences to be had in the national park, and if the weather is bad they’ll definitely be better options.”

Sandy says as New Zealanders and internationals approach their summer naturing it’s important they take the time to prepare, even for short visits.

“Keep yourself safe with the right gear, check the forecast, and plan for changing conditions.

“You can help keep the places we love safe by keeping your distance from wildlife, checking the DOC website for the rules around dog access, and taking your litter home with you.”

“If we protect New Zealand’s unique spaces, our tamariki and their tamariki will be able to enjoy nature as much as we do.”

Editor’s note: at the time of going to print, the Mangapuru section of the trail was temporarily closed due to a rock fall on the bluff section. DOC advised that they hope to have it open by Wednesday 21 January.



The Bridge to Nowhere on the Mangapuru Track. Access to the bridge was closed between the Whanganui River and the Bridge due to a rock fall, but DOC hoped to have it reopened this week.



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Intense six weeks produces motivated reservists

Pack marching, digging a shell scrape and learning to navigate unknown terrain while on leave from employment or university isn't everyone's idea of enjoyment but the 92 Army Reserve Force soldiers who graduated in December took it in their stride.

After six intensive weeks of basic training they have developed resilience, learnt the basics of warfighting and made new mates.

Recruits learn a wide range of skills including weapons training, navigation, field craft and first aid. They are introduced to the first level of the New Zealand Defence Force Leadership Development Framework, Lead Self, says Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Williams, Commanding officer of The Army Depot (TAD).

The framework progresses through various leadership courses that are part of the NZDF culture, encouraging each rank level to actively embrace change and responsibilities.

All Army recruits are trained at The Army Depot (TAD) at Waiouru Military Camp. Lt Col Williams, explains the recruit training is the entry level into the Army Reserve Force.

"It is an intensive and compact course due to the high number of learning objectives that need to be achieved in a short period of time.

"Recruits arrive motivated to learn - they are taking time away from employment or are accustomed to study through university.

"However, while the course is intense there is opportunity to put the lessons into practice during the field exercise. Exercise Kairangi is the final part of recruit training and consolidates all soldiering skills taught in a realistic environment."

Company Sergeant Major for this course, Staff Sergeant Mike Halliday, says recruits are given a presentation on the recruit training, prior to coming to Waiouru.

"I give them a presentation so they understand what to expect, they can talk to their employer and prepare family for the time away. I've spent many years in both the Reserve and Regular Force so can answer the variety of questions that come up.

"On completion of training, recruits find many of the skills are directly transferable to their civilian employment - leadership, time management and resilience are skills useful in any occupation."

After completing recruit training, soldiers head to a variety of trades and corps, including infantry, armoured, medic, combat engineer, and combat driver where they will complete specific training.

"One of the interesting points of the recruits is their broad civilian life occupations," said Staff Sergeant Halliday.

"They include pilots, farmers, police officers, students, stay at home parents, software engineers, tradies and even a flight paramedic, so recruits come from all walks of life."



Reserve Force recruits dig their first shell scrape during the Open Country phase at Waiouru Military Training Area.

New emergency website launched for the region

Manawātū-Whanganui Emergency Management Group has launched its new website, giving people in the region another trusted source of information before, during and after emergencies, reports Horizons Regional Council manager emergency management Chay Hook.

He says the new website, at mwcdem.govt.nz, "provides a one-stop shop for emergency management information".

"Until now, emergency management information for the region has been housed on Horizons Regional Council's website. Having a standalone emergency management website is best practice, bringing us in line with other emergency management groups across the motu."

The new website gives enhanced options for displaying information, says Hook.

"The website will update automatically when MetService issues weather alerts, while people can get information about smaller-scale emergencies via a Regional Alerts section.

"The homepage also features a situation map, which will update in real time with information such as the MetService alerts, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi state highway road closures, and tsunami evacuation zones."

While the website will generally feature preparedness information, including district-by-district information recognising the unique features of each part of the Manawātū-Whanganui Region, there is also the option to flip the website into an 'emergency response mode' during large-scale emergencies, says Mr Hook.

"This emergency response mode will strip out the preparedness information and a lot of imagery, instead prioritising the most urgent information about the specific emergency event. This ensures people get the most important information immediately. It also reduces the data load on people's devices and telecommunications infrastructure."

"We can then put the website back into its

original mode once we are through a response and transitioning into the recovery phase of an emergency."

The New Zealand company that built the website, Effect, has provided a hosting solution which gives an extremely high level of reliability, says Mr Hook.

"This helps to mitigate the risk of the website going down when people need to access it most."

The new website is just one method that will be used to communicate information before, during and after emergencies, says Hook.

"Councils in our region will also continue to use their communications channels to keep their communities informed."

People who have feedback about the new website can email help@horizons.govt.nz with the subject "MWCDEM website", or send a direct message to the Civil Defence Manawātū Whanganui Facebook page.



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PUBLIC NOTICES

Raetihi Ohakune Garden Club

Sunday 25 January - 1pm

Local garden tour.

New members welcome.

Contact Di 021 165 7343.

UNVEILING

LEO PUNCH & KAREN TUKAORA HAYDEN (nee Williams). The unveiling for Leo and Karen will be held on 7 February at the Raetihi Cemetery at 11am. A 'hakere' at the Centre in Seddon Street will follow at approximately 1pm. For further information contact Bill Hayden at 027 220 4771.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

Roadside Herbicide Applications



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For further information, please contact
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PUBLIC NOTICES

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NOTIFICATION OF ELECTION RESULTS

Election of Four Committee Members at the 2025 Annual General Meeting

Rachel ADAMS	7,247.9838 Votes
Teresa HOHEPA	7,151.4657 Votes
Adrian PUCHER	6,828.6293 Votes
Don ROBINSON	6,469.3918 Votes
Paora TOHO	1,169.2101 Votes
Phillip Reweti	1,001.1015 Votes
Richard CRIBB	349.6772 Votes

The members elected to the Committee of Management for a three-year term as a result of a vote on shareholding are, Rachal Adams, Teresa Hohepa, Adrian Pucher and Don Robinson.

Robert Spicer
Secretary



NOTICE OF DAY OF ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

Under the Trust Deed for King Country Trust, notice is given that the following persons have been duly nominated as candidates for the office of Trustee to King Country Trust when nominations closed at 4pm on Wednesday 17 December 2025:

Nominations received (two vacancies):

GREENSLADE, Sandra (Turangi)
JACKSON, Melissa (Taumarunui)
PEPPER, Luke (Taumarunui)

As there are more candidates than there are vacancies to be filled, an election will be held on Thursday 26 February 2026, under the First Past the Post electoral system by postal and online voting.

Issue of voting packs:

Voting packs will be issued from Friday 30 January 2026 to all eligible consumers:

- by email (for consumers with an email address recorded with The Lines Company); or
- by post.

Return of voting documents:

Consumers who receive their voting pack by email will be able to vote online (using the unique voter credentials included in the email).

Consumers who receive their voting pack by post will be able to vote by:

- voting online (using the unique voter credentials shown on the voting document); or
- posting their completed voting document back to the Returning Officer using the ReplyPaid envelope included in their voting pack.

Consumers not natural persons:

Under the Deed of Trust, consumers that are not natural persons will need to appoint a person whose name does not appear on the Consumer Roll to vote on the consumer's behalf. For these consumers, a declaration will be included with the voting pack for the person to complete. If a person is unsure if their name is on the Consumer Roll, they may contact the Returning Office on 0800 922 822 to check.

Dated at Taumarunui, 21 January 2026

Dale Ofsoske, Returning Officer
Independent Election Services Ltd
for King Country Trust

phone 0800 922 822

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- Checking vacant flats and halls after hires
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If something bigger needs fixing, you'll flag it and help organise the right contractor.

What we're looking for

- Handy, practical person with general building or handyman experience
- Able to work on your own and manage your time
- Physically fit and able to move furniture when needed
- Good people skills - friendly, respectful, and patient with tenants
- Takes pride in doing a tidy, solid job
- Own tools a bonus but not essential
- Full, clean driver's licence

Applications can be done online through our careers portal at **www.ruapehudc.govt.nz**. If applying online isn't your thing you're welcome to call into our Taumarunui office and one of our HR team can help you through it. **Applications close Friday 23rd January.**

PUBLIC NOTICES

Ruapehu Mayor Weston Kirton

To arrange a meeting or call back, please phone Council on 06 385 8364 or email: kay.kidd@ruapehudc.govt.nz



Extraordinary Special General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that an **Extraordinary Special General Meeting** of the Raetihi Cosmopolitan Club Inc. will be held at the Club Premises 32 Seddon Street Raetihi on **Thursday 5th February 2026 – 6pm**

The purpose of this meeting is to Reregister as an Incorporated Society under the Incorporated Societies Act 2022.

Special Agenda:

- Welcome by Club President
- Agreement to Reregister under Incorporated Societies Act 2022
- Implementation of Constitution
- Implementation of Club Officers
- Implementation of Club Contact Person
- Close of Special General Meeting

PUBLIC NOTICE OF TENDER OF ABANDONED LAND



Under conduct of the Registrar of the District Court at Taumarunui at the request of the Ruapehu District Council and in exercise of the power of sale contained in the provisions of the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002, the Ruapehu District Council offers by public tender the property listed below: -

Whanui Street, Matiere, Otangi-Heao
Valuation number: 0622030900

Section 9 Block IX Town of Matiere and being all the land contained in Certificate of Title TN90/7 approximately 1214 square metres more or less. The property is situated at Whanui Street, Matiere, Otangi-Heao and is within the territory of the Ruapehu District Council.

Whanui Street, Matiere, Otangi-Heao
Valuation number: 0622031300

Section 3 Block X Town of Matiere and being all the land contained in Certificate of Title TN90/12 approximately 1214 square metres more or less. The property is situated at Whanui Street, Matiere, Otangiwai-Heao and is within the territory of the Ruapehu District Council.

TENDERS CLOSE 4pm, Friday 30 January 2026.

Tender documents are available by contacting Debt Management Central (DMC), on 0508 436 269; dmc@mw.org.nz, DMC, DX PA84005, Feilding or from <http://www.debtmanagementcentral.org.nz>

Tender documents and all enquiries are to be submitted to DMC the agent for the Local Authority.

Late tenders will not be accepted.

This notice is authorised by:

Clive Manley
Chief Executive
Ruapehu District Council
26 November 2025



Fastest billy goats and nannys



ABOVE: Jackson Cole crosses the Mangaturuturu River. ABOVE RIGHT: Maia Flint heads up the Silica Rapids slope. BELOW LEFT: Jackson Cole with his Goat trophy. BELOW RIGHT: Ben Swift, the fastest local. Credit: Photos4sale.co.nz.



ABOVE: Flynn Funnell was the fastest in The Kid race on Saturday, home in 16:49. BELOW: although not in the top places, Ava Drummond was still a winner in the event. Photos: Liz Brooker.



From Page 1

line. With people staying in the finish area, each finisher was cheered on by more people.

“There was a little bit of shelter and it improved the vibe. I think we’ll keep that.”

Weather is always an important factor for the event, with a contingency course mapped out in case conditions are not safe for runners.

Lowe said the forecast leading up to Saturday was changing daily, with high winds forecast earlier.

“Luckily the wind dropped down enough so we could go ahead.”

She said at 5am on Saturday Whakapapa weather was “beautiful and still, thank goodness”.

Lowe said the team were very happy with the way the event ran, with no issues and no major injuries in the very technical track.

She praised the 60-plus volunteers who made the event possible.

“It was epic. The volunteers were absolutely awesome, with high energy, supporting and welcoming the runners all day long.”

A number of local community groups and organisations provided volunteers, with OECT able to give back to the community through grants for local projects – expected to be around \$8000-\$10,000 this year.

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