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Ruapehu Bulletin

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**Pop
up
art
P2**



**Army
tests
critical
calls
P4**



**Off the
Grid meets
boar's
nest
P7**



**Mardi
Gras out
of the
ashes
P11**

'Difficult choices': Mayor warns rates cap a threat to services

Ruapehu councillors outvote Kirton on rates increase

Ruapehu district's mayor has warned his council may have to reduce services if Government rates caps are introduced.

His alert comes after Ruapehu District Council adopted an 8.7% average rates increase for the coming year and launched a full review of all levels of service.

"Council simply won't be able to continue providing every service at its current level if we are expected to operate within a future rates cap," mayor Weston Kirton said.

"That means some difficult conversations lie ahead."

Under the Government's proposed rates capping policy, councils could be required to hold increases as low as 2% from 2028.

"Whatever the cap ultimately ends up at, it will be significantly lower than the increases we have traditionally relied on to meet rising costs," Kirton said.

The Ruapehu council's Levels of Service Review will be undertaken in preparation for next year's new 10-year Long-Term Plan 2027-37, to understand which services can be sustained under tighter financial constraints.

Each service will be assessed to determine whether it is legally required, could be delivered differently or should be reduced.

"Even where a service is considered core, there is often flexibility around how that service is delivered and the standard at which it is provided," Kirton said.

The council has adopted the 8.7% aver-



age rates increase in its 2026/27 Annual Plan.

Wanted lower

Rates will fund 59% (\$37.3 million) of the council's costs for the year. The remainder will be funded by subsidies and grants (34%, or \$21.4m), fees and charges (6%, or \$4m) and other minor sources 1% (\$700k).

Kirton said the rates increase delivered on the council's commitment to keep average rates increases below 9% for each of the first three years of the current Long-Term Plan (LTP).

But he said he wanted a lower rates rise – a 5% average increase – and was disappointed that wasn't achievable.

"Council did look closely at whether we could come in under 9% but ultimately decided that reducing rates further would have compromised levels of service too greatly, particularly in land transport.

"I respect that decision, but I would have preferred to see us achieve 5% this year."

Councillor Viv Hoeta said this year's annual plan discussions had been an exercise in identifying core business "while ensuring we can still do requests for service".

She told *Local Democracy Reporting* a 5% rates cap was unrealistic in this climate.

"We have rising cost on infrastructure,

Turn to Page 3

Biggest lesson from eruptions was relationships



The late Sir Tumu Te Heuheu (left) and the late Matiu Mareikura on the tephra dam at the rim of the crater lake in June 1997. Photo: Dr Harry Keys.

By Moana Ellis, Local Democracy Reporter

The central North Island eruptions 30 years ago transformed New Zealand's approach to volcanic risk – and also the network of relationships that now underpins emergency management.

In 1995 and 1996, a series of spectacular eruptions from Mt Ruapehu shook the Central Plateau, triggering lahars, avalanches and explosive jets of steam, hot water and rock.

Acidic ash spread across much of the central and eastern North Island, disrupting tourism, closing roads and airports, contaminating water supplies, shorting power pylons, damaging crops and killing about 2000 sheep.

The largest eruption, on 23 September 1995, sent a plume of ash and debris 12km into the sky and hurled rocks kilometres from the crater.

While no human lives were lost, there were several

Turn to Page 12

BRINGING GREATER ENERGY TO THE RUAPEHU DISTRICT

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Tourism for all seasons

By Carl Bates, Member of Parliament for Whanganui
Mardi Gras week in Ohakune is always a sign that winter has arrived on Mt Ruapehu. This year, as the festival marks 30 years since it first helped lift local spirits after the 1995 and 1996 eruptions, it also tells a bigger story: Ruapehu has become a destination for all seasons.

The Tongariro Alpine Crossing, in the World Heritage Tongariro National Park attracts thousands of walkers every year, many from overseas. It is widely considered one of the best day-walks in the world.

Then there's the Mountains to Sea - Ngā Ara Tūhono Cycle Trail, running from Tongariro National Park to the Tasman Sea at Whanganui and operated by the Ngā Ara Tūhono Charitable Trust.

Additional government funding of \$1.35 million will allow the next section of Ruapehu's Te Hangāruru trail to be finished. The highlight of the 1.1km section of trail between Pokaka and Last Spike will be a 99 metre long suspension bridge.

Open sections of the trail have attracted strong support, and as the full route is completed, we expect even greater numbers of visitors to stay longer and spend more — injecting valuable dollars into our local economy.

This investment by the National-led Government will also create jobs, both during construction and in the long term, supporting hospitality, tourism services, and conservation efforts. This will benefit both the Ruapehu and Whanganui Districts.

Latest figures indicate that around 80% of the users of the trail come from outside the Ruapehu District, including around 18% being international visitors. Their spending powers the local economy.

The Ruapehu District is growing as a tourism hub for all seasons, with a range of year-round activities in a diversity of landscapes, and in an area rich in cultural significance.

This is good news for a region that has faced real challenges before, and continues to build a stronger, more resilient visitor economy for the future. Investment into tourism assets like the Mountains to Sea - Ngā Ara Tūhono Cycle Trail is part of the National-led Government's focus on fixing the basics and building the future for regional New Zealand.

Art pops up in Taumarunui

Ruapehu residents gathered at the Taumarunui Art Centre on Saturday 27 June for a lively Pop Up Art Day celebrating the district's forthcoming public sculpture, *Kotahitanga / Unity – Together We Are Stronger*.

The event offered hands-on creative activities, opportunities to meet sculptor Raynor Dunn, and a chance for the community to help shape the artwork's final design.

The day opened with a blessing and karakia led by Anglican Minister Ricki Cribb, followed by waiata from Ida Hamm.

As Dunn and local artist Marcus Tatton began preparing the installation site on Hakiha Street, whānau and community members took to the art boards, contributing drawings, words and ideas expressing what kotahitanga means to them. These responses will directly inform the sculptor's final concept, due for installation by the end of August.

Representatives from across the local arts sector attended, including Art in the Ruapehu Community, Ruapehu Creative, the Twin Rivers Gallery, the Taumarunui Arts Centre and the newly-formed Ruapehu Arts Advisory Group — the initiative's



Ruapehu Arts Advisory Group makes its mark. From left, Deb Brock, Northern Ruapehu Arts Advisory Group representative, Ruapehu's mayor Weston Kirton, sculptor Raynor Dunn, Kate Milham, Southern Ruapehu Arts Advisory Group representative and councillor John Chapman, Coordinator of the Arts Advisory Group. Photo: Jude Chevin.

co-ordinating body. The gathering reflected the project's central theme of unity and the group's vision

to strengthen collaboration between Ruapehu District Council and the wider arts community.

Ruapehu's mayor Weston Kirton addressed the crowd at 11am, acknowledging the value of public art in bringing people together and celebrating local creativity.

A sausage sizzle kept the atmosphere relaxed and welcoming throughout the morning.

The sculpture project is the first to be supported by the Ruapehu Arts Advisory Group and has been made possible through funding from Pub Charity Ltd, alongside contributions

from local businesses, groups, and individuals. Once installed, the artwork will stand as a highly visible symbol of collective aspirations, resilience, and the shared commitment to nurturing a vibrant arts community in the Ruapehu District.

Ruapehu Events & What's On

JULY 2026

Royal Theatre Movies, starts 7pm	
American Graffiti (M)	4 July
Mardi Gras	4 July
Tūroa Opening Day	4 July
See www.turoa.com for details	
Whakapapa Opening Day	4 July
See www.whakapapa.com for details	
Matariki	10 July
Puanga Night Market, Raetihi Primary School	16 July
Contact kayhenare06@gmail.com or maakituatini@gmail.com	

AUGUST 2026

Rally Taumarunui	8 Aug
Follow the Rally Taumarunui page for details. #RallyTaumarunui2026	
Royal Theatre Movies, starts 7pm	
Smash Palace (R16)	15 August
Winter Art Exhibition	23 Aug - 6 Sept
Paul Stieglbauer - paul@4thames.co.nz	

SEPTEMBER 2026

Retro Day	26 Sept
Paul Stieglbauer - paul@4thames.co.nz	
Waimarino Art Awards	26 Sept - 2 Oct
See WaimarinoArtAwards.org.nz for more information	

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LINK YOUR EVENT TO EVENTFINDA FOR FREE

Eating out in the Ruapehu District

Call 06 385 8532 to list your business here or email ads@ruapehubulletin.co.nz

KINGS BAR & RESTAURANT

3 Rimu St Ohakune Junction Ph: 06 385 8648
Est in 1913, historic Kings offers an inviting menu by international chefs, a great selection of boutique wines and craft breweries including award winning Ruapehu Brewing Co beers in the fridge and on tap. See our Facebook page for what's on. Please check our open times as these will vary.

LKNZ LODGE & CAFE

1 Rata St, Ohakune Ph: 027 257 LKNZ (5569)
Open every day. Menu includes our delicious big breakfast, creamy mushrooms, homemade soups, wedges, nachos, toasties, waffles and more ... Volcanic coffee, muffins & scones, real fruit smoothies and thick shakes. Dine in or takeaway. Onsite parking. www.lknz.co.nz

POWDERKEG

Bottom of the mountain road Ph: 06 385 8888
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THE CYPRUS TREE

79 Clyde St, Ohakune Ph: 06 385 8857
Warm fires, seasonal food, local wines and craft beers. A welcoming place for locals and visitors alike, with a playroom for the kids and a relaxed atmosphere for friends, families and celebrations. Proudly serving the Ruapehu community for more than 20 years. Open every day.

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47 Clyde St, Ohakune Ph: 06 385 9120
Open 7 days from 8am - 3pm for all day breakfast and lunch. Serving Havana Coffee. A cosy memorable atmosphere with a great range of cabinet food and beverages, Frappé and smoothies. Vegan/Gluten-free options for both savoury and sweet are available. Speedy free Wi-Fi! A perfect place for everybody!

Community and Emergency Services

Alzheimers Whanganui Inc - Email admin@alzheimerswhanganui.org.nz or for support phone 06-345 8833
Budget Advice - Email waimarinobudgetservices@gmail.com or phone 027 259 5285.
CCS Disability Action (Whanganui) - Sheryl Brightwell 0800-789-654
Child, Adolescent and Sexual Health Nurse - 06-385-5019
Child Youth and Family Service - 0508-326 459
Churches: Anglican, 06-385-4957. Baptist, 027-206-1874. Catholic, 06-385-8858 or 027 606 5186. Gospel Chapel, 06-385-8453. Presbyterian, 06-388-0675 or 06-385-8708. Waiouru - duty chaplain 06-387-5599 ext 7031 or 021-493-692
Civil Defence - Simon Osborne, Emergency Management Officer (EMO), RDC - 07 895 8188, or 027 220 0569. Simon.Osborne@ruapehudc.govt.nz
CLAW community free legal advice: Whanganui 06-348-8288, 0800 00 36 36
Doctors: In an emergency call 111. Ruapehu Health Ltd 06-385-4211
Information Centres - Ohakune 0800 647 483, Raetihi 06-385-4805
Mountains to Sea - Ngā Ara Tūhono - Lynley Twyman, Trail Manager, +64 21 4030306
Ngati Rangi Community Health Centre - 06-385-9580
Plunket Society - Plunket Nurse 06-385-5019
Police and Search & Rescue Emergency, call 111
Ohakune 06-385-0100, Raetihi 06-385-4002, Waiouru 06-387-6884, Military Police 0800-50-11-22
Red Cross - 0800 RED CROSS (0800 733 27677)
Rotary Club Raetihi - Ohakune - 027-344-5669
Ruapehu Budgeting Service Ohakune. Budgeting License No 119423. Email: Ruapehubudgetingservice@gmail.com or call Justin on 0211-735-767
Ruapehu Maori Wardens - Email: ruapehumaoriwardens@gmail.com
Ruapehu Neighborhood Support Groups - Email: Ruapehuneighborhoodgroup@gmail.com or call Justin 0211-735-767
Ruapehu REAP - 0800 00 REAP (0800 007 327)
St John - in an emergency call 111
Taumarunui Counselling Services: For confidential counselling in Waimarino phone 07-895-6393
Victim Support Contact Centre - 0800 842 846
Waimarino Cancer Society: Co-ordinator 06 348 7402
Waimarino Health Care Centre - Raetihi 06-385-5019
Waimarino Community Toy Library - waimarinotoylibrary@gmail.com
Women's Refuge - 0800-REFUGE 0800 73384

Ruapehu Mayor - Weston Kirton, enquiries to 06-385-8364 or 07-895-8188.
Owhango-National Park Community Board:
Peter Zimmer - Chairperson 027 479 1926; Gail Gray - Deputy Chair 027 434 6599; Anthony Gurr 021 487 742; Eddie Marsters 021 108 0279; Murray Wilson 027 542 9079; Luke Pepper - (RDC Rep) 027 329 2849
Taumarunui/Ohura Ward Community Board:
Molly Jeffries, Chairperson 021 431 8333; Sophie Stockbridge, Deputy Chairperson 020 401 11190; Johnny Dryden 027 573 4726; Brian Portland 027 558 5585; Oriwia Wanakore 020 498 4088; Robyn Gram (RDC Rep) 027 389 1912
Waimarino-Waiouru Community Board:
John (Luigi) Hotter - Chairperson 027 274 2616; Stu Robinson - Deputy Chairperson 021 024 07657; Kay Henare 027 924 7252; Colin Pakai 021 091 67315; Emma Young 027 347 1457; David (Rabbit) Nottage - (RDC Rep) 021 111 6514
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New online building consent system to launch



Council's new Datascape building consenting system will allow applicants to track the progress of their building consents online, receive automatic notifications when updates occur, and interact with the building team through a modern end-to-end digital system.

Ruapehu's Building Control Team is introducing the Datascape online building consenting system, providing customers with visibility of their building consent applications and a streamlined digital experience.

The new platform will allow applicants to track the progress of their building consents online, receive automatic notifications when updates occur, and interact with Council through a modern end-to-end digital system.

Building Control manager Darryn Cosford said the move to Datascape reflects the Ruapehu District Council's commitment to continually improving the way it delivers services to customers.

"One of the key benefits for applicants is visibility of their consent application. People understandably want to know how their application is progressing.

"Datascape provides real-time tracking and automated notifications, helping customers stay informed without needing to contact Council for updates," he said.

Developed specifically for local government and used by councils across New Zealand and Australia, the Datascape platform is designed to manage the entire building consent process, from application and assessment through to issuing consents and inspections.

It also integrates with other core council systems,

helping to improve efficiency, collaboration, and regulatory compliance.

The introduction of the new system comes as councils and government continue to focus on improving the efficiency of the building consent process nationwide. Recent Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment reporting shows that improving consent processing performance remains a key priority across New Zealand's building sector.

Cosford said that Council recognises that some customers may have questions about the new platform and is offering demonstration sessions ahead of the launch.

"As with all new systems, this is a significant change and our team is keen to help people become familiar with the new platform before it goes live.

"We want to make the transition as smooth as possible and encourage anyone interested to come along to one of our demonstration sessions."

Demonstration sessions will be held in the Ohakune Council Chamber today, Wednesday 1 July from 5pm to 6pm, and in Taumarunui Council building staffroom on Thursday 2 July from 5pm to 6pm (please use rear entrance off Taumarunui Street).

'Difficult choices': Mayor warns rates cap a threat to services

From Page 1
contractual obligations and community aspirations," Hoeta said.

"This is a difficult time and keeping our rates as we promised is responsible and will allow us to achieve as much as we can."

Councillor Kuru Ketu said it was "never going to be achievable" to get to 5% for the 26/27 year.

"Councillors debated this for six hours back in February, and the advice from staff was clear on this point. If we did set [rates] at 5%, we would have deferred from our already set LTP, [would have to] potentially pay for an engagement process including audit costs to do that, and risk not being able to access NZTA subsidies for operational costs related to our roading system."

Positive step

Addressing levels of services was a positive step, Ketu said.

"It has not been done in a very long time (or potentially ever) and the conflated nature of some of the services are long overdue a review."

Ketu urged the community to "proactively participate" in the review and work to understand what the council does.

"As we move to amalgamate, it's crucial we know what the landscape is likely to be," Ketu said.

"Rates capping is going to be complex, but ... the reduction to a 2% rate level is achievable because waters will be removed and billed externally by the water CCO."

Kirton also called upon the community to get involved in the review process.

"The review isn't about making decisions behind closed doors. It's about working with our communities to understand what services they value most, where they believe savings could be made, and what level of rates they are prepared to support.

"If we want rates to remain affordable into the future, we need to decide together what council should focus on and what services we may no longer be able to provide at current levels."

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

Significant changes at King Country Trust

Significant changes for the King Country Trust (KCT) have been announced including a major uplift in its financial position.

Those who pay for a power connection in and around Turangi, Ohakune or Taumarunui are more than likely a consumer beneficiary of KCT.

"With the selling of King Country Energy Ltd to Contact in April, KCT has never been in a stronger financial position, with assets nearing \$77.0 million, up from \$53.5 million," an-

nounced Trust chair Adie Doyle.

Two new trustees, Luke Pepper and Mellisa Jackson, both of Taumarunui, have joined the board after the recent election. Adie Doyle is once again chair, with Jo Bransgrove and Uwe Kroll representing Turangi and Ohakune respectively.

"Given the significant change in the nature of KCT's business, trustees elected to halve their remuneration for the foreseeable future, also halving the number of meetings held per

annum," said Doyle.

"Those cost savings will then result in greater future annual distributions to its Consumer Beneficiaries. This year, that total will be \$1,850,000 and will be distributed through your power account."

Trustees invite all Consumer Beneficiaries to its Annual General Meeting, which covers the 2025/2026 financial year, to be held at Oreti Lodge, Pukawa on 20 August at 4.00pm.

We're fixing the basics

and building the future.

Carl Bates MP
National Party Candidate for Whanganui

incl Ruapehu - South Taranaki - Stratford




Authorised by Carl Bates, 200B Victoria Avenue, Whanganui.

Need advice on the area, activities or even the weather, call or stop in and see the team for firsthand knowledge.

Free phone: 0800 647 483.
Email: isites@visitruapehu.com.

Ohakune: 9am-4pm
54 Clyde Street.
OHK: 06 3858427

Taumarunui: 9am- 4pm
Railway Station, 116 Hakiaha Street.
TAU: 07 895 7494



RUAPEHU
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Critical decisions in combat a key focus for large Waiouru exercise

The ability to pivot and make critical decisions on the battlefield are vital skills for the soldiers and officers of the New Zealand Army, Ngāti Tūmatauenga – which was up for assessment during Exercise Crete, one of the largest NZ Army exercises to be held at the Waiouru Military Training Area this year.

The exercise, led by 1st Battalion, Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (1RNZIR), culminated with a live fire defensive battle at dawn on the final day.

Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Caleb Berry says troops, commanders and the operational Battle Group headquarters were

evaluated, with lessons learned at all levels.

“Exercise Crete gave our combat teams and our commanders a clear focus as they continue their activity programme to increase our combat readiness leading to Talisman Sabre 27 – a major multi-national exercise in Australia next year,” Lieutenant Colonel Berry said.

The exercise saw both Queen Alexandra’s Mounted Rifles (QAMR) and Victor Company generate two Combat Teams, including supporting arms of artillery from 16 Field Regiment, and engineers from 2nd Engineer Regiment.

More than 300 personnel took part including infantry, armour (NZ Light Armoured Vehicles



A New Zealand Army Light Armoured Vehicle fires its 25mm cannon during the final defensive battle of Exercise Crete. Photos: NZDF.

Letters

Turkey federation

• What is the saying ... turkeys voting for Christmas? It seems to me the proponents for a federation of councils are too tied up in their own self-importance, protecting their own positions under the guise of representation.

We are not well represented today.

This would be just a Clayton’s amalgamation. The governance of our councils is at the root of the problem and why we find ourselves in a mess today. It needs a significant overhaul and downsized to maybe just a single representative with equal voting rights of others around the table. This has been one option government has pointed to.

We need an elected representative with practical know-how combined with knowing their way around a balance sheet and financials to ask searching and challenging questions of a CEO and management.

If we don’t do something different, we are just in for more of the same. More of the same has failed us in the past to the point other Councils are not welcoming Ruapehu and the debt it brings to the table.

It is not alone in that position and this is why Government has acted because the current model has failed. I cannot see how a federation of councils with the same or similar number of elected members as we have today will somehow now succeed. But that is just my opinion.

Bruce Rollinson



and Bushmaster Protected Mobility Vehicles), anti-armour and direct-fire support weapons, infantry support dogs, uncrewed aerial systems (UAS), artillery, combat and plant engineers, first and second-line logistics, military police and signallers.

Lieutenant Colonel Berry said the exercise was also a tactical milestone for 1 RNZIR since its amalgamation with QAMR Regiment in December 2025 and a significant step for the New Zealand Army’s Motorised Infantry Battle Group (MIBG).

“The purpose was two-fold: firstly for the Companies to generate and evaluate their combat teams and, secondly, to develop the overarching MIBG headquarters – ensuring its staff and processes could effectively command and control the troops at the Battle Group level.

“I wanted to see an adaptable and cohesive group – and that’s what I saw.”

Lieutenant Colonel Berry said a particular point of success was the integration of supporting elements from artillery, engineers, signallers, logistics and military police who also gained valuable experience and time in the field alongside the combat teams.

Next on the agenda for 1 RNZIR and the wider 1st (NZ) Brigade will be Exercise Hill 60 in August, where the entire Battle Group will be evaluated. This will include soldiers from the 2nd/1st Battalion RNZIR acting as live, free-play enemy to test troops and command teams.

Personnel firing 40mm grenade machine gun (GMM) in a supporting role at Exercise Crete.

THE WEEKLY WORKOUT answers for each puzzle are included on this page

857

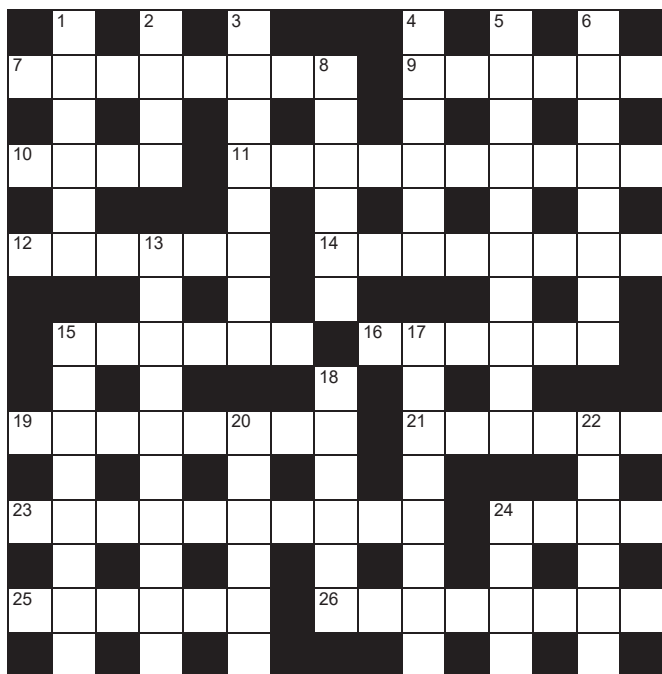
QUICK CROSSWORD

Across

- 7. Resemblance (8)
- 9. Lacking principles (6)
- 10. Cunning (4)
- 11. Brotherhood (10)
- 12. Citizens (6)
- 14. Short of money (colloq) (8)
- 15. Emphasise (6)
- 16. Ruins (6)
- 19. Ordinary (8)
- 21. Cause resentment (6)
- 23. Character (10)
- 24. Rise rapidly (4)
- 25. Uncivilised (6)
- 26. Appropriate (8)

Down

- 1. Separate (6)
- 2. Depend (4)
- 3. Altruistic (8)
- 4. Vocation (6)
- 5. Fit of rage or hysteria (10)
- 6. Insensitive (8)
- 8. Meagre (6)
- 13. Fussy (10)
- 15. Reduced to skin and bone (8)
- 17. Delusions of persecution (8)
- 18. Careless (6)



- 20. Mountain hut (6)
- 22. Held legally responsible (6)
- 24. Criticise severely (4)



Enjoy WordFit puzzles? Magazines available from www.thepuzzlecompany.co.nz

Puzzles © The Puzzle Company

SUDOKU

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

9	3			1				
			8			7	9	
		2	7			6		
						9	7	
	6	4				8	5	
8	9							
	1			9	6			
4	2			6				
			3			1	8	

		2			6	3		5
	8		1		4		7	
6	7		8					1
3			4				1	9
		4	9	1	7	5		
1	2		3					4
7			6		4			2
	4		5		9			3
5	1	4			6			

The Top 10

1. Dawn Tinsley and David Brent are characters in which TV series?
2. Which is furthest north, Kaikoura or Westport?
3. In which decade did Frank Sinatra die?
4. What do two parallel horizontal wiggly lines represent in mathematics?
5. Who was released in 1990 after 27 years in prison?
6. Is podagra a plant disease, gout of the big toe, or a medication for men?
7. The country of Myanmar used to be known by what name?
8. Justine Henin and Kim Clijsters both reached No.1 in women’s singles tennis rankings. What nationality are they?
9. Were the \$1 and \$2 bank notes replaced by coins in 1985, 1988, or 1991?
10. Which US jazz singer was known as Lady Day?

CROSSWORD

18. Remiss, 20. Chalef, 22. Liable, 24. Slam.
13. Particular, 15. Skeletal, 17. Paranoia, Career, 5. Connption, 6. Tactless, 8. Sparse, 4. Down: 1. Divide, 2. Rely, 3. Selfless, 26. Suitable.
23. Reputation, 24. Soar, 25. Savage, Stress, 16. Spoils, 19. Mediocore, 21. Rankle, 11. Fraternity, 12. People, 14. Strapped, 15. Across: 7. Likeness, 9. Amoral, 10. Willy.

SUDOKU

8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5	3	1	4	2	8	6	9	7	3
2	4	6	5	7	9	1	3	8	5
7	8	3	6	1	4	5	2	9	7
1	2	9	8	3	5	7	6	4	2
8	6	4	9	1	7	5	2	3	8
3	7	5	6	4	9	1	8	4	7
6	5	7	2	8	3	9	4	1	6
9	8	1	5	4	2	7	6	3	5
4	1	2	7	9	6	3	8	5	4

Ohakune Mardi Gras heads for 7000+

Unique Mardi Gras was 'the smoothest'



ABOVE: A group of happy, sparkly Wellington unicorns. Photo: Robert Milne. Left: Pendulum had the street packed. Photo: Doug Peters, courtesy of Ambient Light. For more band photos see <https://www.ambientlightblog.com/ohakune-mardi-gras-18-ohakune-nz-2018/>

The smoothest, boldest and possibly the biggest Mountain Mardi Gras has the new organisers "super stoked" at their first time running the event.

The Mardi Gras returned this year with a new crew, after it was cancelled last year.

Mitch Lowe, from Audioology Touring, said the feedback and debriefing has mostly been very positive.

"We're rapt to deliver one of the biggest bands (Pendulum) to Ohakune, and to have everything run so smooth."

Mitch Lowe said they're not happy with the entry system, with the majority of people all arriving at the same time, which swamped the system.

"We're brainstorming that so we can do it better."

He said there were also a few bottlenecks inside the venue that need sorting out.

"But otherwise, the team did so well. It was a super positive vibe even though it was crowded."

Turn to Page 4

Mardi Gras – 'Fat Tuesday' in French, Shrove Tuesday in English, or Pancake Tuesday – in the Christian calendar marks the last day for the fasting season of Lent, when people live it up before avoiding rich, fatty foods.

But in New Zealand, the name Mardi Gras was commandeered to be the label for the mid-winter street festival in Ohakune.

At the time of writing, Audioology, the company who as run the event since 2018, had sold over 7000 tickets and heading for 8000.

The event is owned by Ohakune Events Charitable Trust, with Audioology Touring joining in 2018 to help run it.

Trust chairwoman Janelle Hinch said organisers and the town were feeling positive about the event.

"There was the threat of it not being in Ohakune and everyone was like 'oh no, we can't lose Mardi Gras'," she said.

"I think there has been an invigorated enthusiasm to attend this year's event. I think the whole town is ready for the season to kick off with a bang with Mardi Gras."

Mardi Gras weekend last year contributed about \$2.7m to the Ruapehu economy, bringing in more than 6100 visitors.

"People make a real weekend of it; it's not just a Saturday street party. As a host town, Ohakune does a really good job of welcoming people and taking care of them."

"Seeing the transition from what Mardi Gras used to be to what it is like now, the care, detail and response to any issue has been quite amazing to watch," Hinch said.

The event will feature domestic and international artists: ANGRYBABY, BADGER, BENNY L, DAVE SUMMER, GARDNA, HOLY GOOF, MELL HALL, KRAFTY KUTS, LYNLY, MATRIX & FUTUREBOUNDS, SHAPESHIFTER DJ + MC SET, TALISHA, TECHNIMATIC, TS7. Special Guests: The Bloody Beetroots plus local legends: B.ANGEL • BEX ON DEX • BRINIX • CODES • DAJ • DJ DALLOW • DJ NIXIE • ESSKAY • EX-FREQ • FLIGHT CLUB • GUSTY • HENO B2B VIVE • MALWARE ONIT • OPTION • PULSE PROMOTIONS • RANDELL • RONI V RYZZYN • SHUDDIT

Audioology's first Ohakune Mardi Gras in 2018 – dubbed the smoothest-run event since the first in 1996. Ruapehu Bulletin.

\$1m in ski passes gift for Mardi Gras partygoers

More than \$1 million worth of Tūroa day passes have been given away through the Ohakune Mardi Gras 2026 promotion, with organisers expecting up to 8000 visitors to descend on the mountain town this weekend.

Every Mardi Gras attendee will receive a complimentary Tūroa day pass, creating what organisers believe could be one of the largest ski pass giveaways in New Zealand history.

The initiative is made possible through a partnership between the Ohakune Events Charitable Trust, Boost Ohakune, Audioology Touring and Pure Tūroa, with a shared goal of bringing more visitors to the region to showcase everything that makes Ohakune one of New Zealand's premier winter destinations.

James Simpson, head of brand and marketing for Pure Tūroa, said the partnership aims to give more people the opportunity to experience the mountain.

"At Tūroa, we're passionate about sharing the mountain with everyone, including people who may never have considered skiing or snowboarding before. We've heard from multiple Mardi Gras attendees in the past who have never even come up the mountain road. This is an amazing opportunity to change that.

"Snow sports are a fantastic way to get outdoors, clear your mind, challenge yourself and spend quality time with friends and whānau. If a free day pass helps someone discover a new passion or create a lasting memory, then that's a win for all of us."

Turn to Page 7

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Encourage your friends, whānau, workmates, school, or community group to get involved too. One choice. One month. A lasting impact.



For more info inc. to join the thousands of people pledging to refuse single-use plastics this July scan the QR code or see plasticfreejuly.org



<p>1 Making a Plastic Free Pledge</p>	<p>2 Using what we have</p>	<p>3 Bringing reusable bags</p>	<p>4 Cleaning up litter</p>
<p>5 Refilling water bottles</p>	<p>6 Choosing reusable cups</p>	<p>7 Buying unwrapped produce</p>	<p>8 Bringing reusable cutlery</p>
<p>9 Skipping plastic straws</p>	<p>10 Doing a waste audit</p>	<p>11 Making plastic free lunches</p>	<p>12 BYO takeaway containers</p>
<p>13 Refusing plastic wrap</p>	<p>14 Avoiding plastic wipes</p>	<p>15 Switching to shampoo bars</p>	<p>16 Making household cleaners</p>
<p>17 Avoiding plastic bin liners</p>	<p>18 Wearing natural fibres</p>	<p>19 Choosing laundry sheets or powder</p>	<p>20 Switching to reusable razors</p>
<p>21 Choosing plastic free snacks</p>	<p>22 Skipping plastic party favours</p>	<p>23 Starting a mug library</p>	<p>24 Borrowing what we need</p>
<p>25 Avoiding plastic decorations</p>	<p>26 Plastic free picnic</p>	<p>27 Choosing reusable period products</p>	<p>28 Storing food without plastic</p>
<p>29 Choosing to dine in</p>	<p>30 Sharing with others</p>	<p>31</p>	

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TV chefs cook up at the Boar's Best



TV chefs Manu Feildel, at right, and Colin Fassnidge, second from right, discuss the use of preserved garlic at the Boar's Nest in Ohakune earlier this year. They were filming for an episode of *Off the Grid* with Colin and Manu, which screens on TVNZ on Sunday.

Free ski passes for Mardi Gras partygoers

From Page 5

"We want more people experiencing everything that makes Tūroa, Ohakune, and Mt Ruapehu such a special place."

Ohakune Mardi Gras has been bringing visitors to the mountain town for three decades. This year's event continues that tradition, combining live music, winter celebrations and a free day on the slopes for every attendee.

Boost Ohakune chairperson Cam Robertson said the promotion was expected to deliver significant benefits to local businesses.

"Every ticket sold creates value far beyond the event itself. Visitors are not only attending one of New Zealand's great winter festivals, they're

also being encouraged to return and experience the mountain, stay longer and explore the wider region."

Audiology Touring director Mitch Lowe said the response to the promotion had been overwhelmingly positive.

"Mardi Gras has always been about creating unforgettable winter experiences. Adding a complimentary Tūroa day pass for every attendee has taken the event to another level and has made 2026 one of our most anticipated events yet."

Simpson said ticket holders have a limited time to redeem their day passes, but have an extended period in which they can use them.

Ohakune Mardi Gras 2026 takes place on Saturday 4 July.

Fewer than 3% of Horizons residents submit on council reforms

By Rebecca Hogan, Local Democracy Reporter
Fewer than 3% of the more than 100,000 people living in four Horizons districts have submitted feedback on local government reforms.

Despite being the smallest of the districts, Rangitikei District Council received the second-highest level of community engagement on how they want their council to respond to the ongoing Head Start pathway reform with 333 of the 16,000 residents, or 2.08%, sending in submissions on amalgamations.

RMA Reform Minister Chris Bishop told *Local Democracy Reporting* there was "broad dissatisfaction" with duplications and historic inefficiencies in local government he felt could be reduced through council reforms.

At the final in-person community gathering in Rangitikei, mayor Andy Watson said to Bulls residents that the timing and execution of reforms had been done in anticipation of the general election for "purely political reasons".

Council posted various "Rangitikei at the Table" posts on social media during the submission period, attracting 145,395 views.

Rangitikei resident Nigel Ward commented on the council's Facebook announcement of the reform vote results, saying the council and its staff had done "sterling work" and people should not "moan" about the lower than expected turnout.

"To put it in context, if Wellington's new waters organisation had the same hit rate for their recent water strategy consultation they would have had 8640 submissions from their population of 432,000. They got 1150," Ward commented.

Those appearing the most passionate were the

residents of Tararua, with around 2.16% of the 18,950 population submitting.

Notably, Tararua District Council supported the 46% of those submitters who called on leaders to "fight for a better option" and challenge the narrow three-month time frame enforced upon councils under this reform.

Mayor Scott Gilmore remained adamant in his desire for a binding referendum on this issue for Tararua residents, to ensure every "intergenerational" decision made would benefit the district's future.

Manawātū mayor Michael Ford compared reforms and the mandatory Back Stop process which councils faced if they didn't submit a proposal by August 9, to a "giant dating game".

Ford felt his district had a lot to offer councils seeking an amalgamation partner, but Manawātū didn't necessarily want to merge, so if they weren't careful they could be "sold off like a bride to some groom without our consent."

Manawātū had extended the community engagement deadline to June 30, and as of June 26 roughly 2% of its population, 675 people, had sent submissions.

Horowhenua District Council had received 660 responses – about 1.72% of 38,400 residents.

As well as community hui held in the last month, Horowhenua councillors also held sessions with residents coined "Cuppa with a Councillor".

Māori Ward councillor Lani Ketu said at the gathering in Shannon, if her district did amalgamate to form a larger unitary council with others, then Horowhenua and its people could be left behind like some "small ant" while bigger councils thrived.

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

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New Datascape Building Consenting System

See Council's New Building Consent System Before It Goes Live

Council's Building Control Team is introducing a new online building consenting system called Datascape in early July. The new system will allow customers to:

- Track building consent progress online
- Receive notifications when updates are made
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- Access a more streamlined digital consenting experience

Whether you're a homeowner, builder, designer, architect, or regularly work with building consents, you're welcome to come along, and see how the new system works, and ask questions at our demonstration.

Datascape Building Consenting System demonstration

- Ohakune Council Chamber

★ Wednesday 1st July - 5pm to 6pm



Ohakune squash

Results from last week's Ohakune Squash Club interhouse saw Karakal narrowly beat Prince 92/91, Tecnifibre beat Dunlop 99/90, Salming beat Head 111/91 and Stellar beat Unsquashable 101/88.

Points to date: Tecnifibre 547, Stellar 529, Salming 501, Dunlop 495, Unsquashable 483, Head 473, Karakal 453 and Prince 446.

Draw for this Thursday is at Ohakune: 5:00pm Salming vs Prince, 6:30pm Tecnifibre vs Head, 8:00pm Unsquashable vs Karakal and at Raetihi at 5:30pm Dunlop vs Stellar.

Round the mountain interclub results from matches at Ohakune were: Waimarino beat Taumarunui One 10/7, Ruapehu College beat Turangi 12/7 and Ohakune beat Taumarunui Two 12/4. Points with two weeks to go are Ohakune 93, Ruapehu College 80, Turangi 73, Waimarino 65, Taumarunui One 52 and Taumarunui Two 45.

Weekend results from the Waitara tournament saw Fiona Fraser win women's division three and Derek Fraser runner up in men's division four.

This weekend three Ohakune players head to Tauranga to compete in the National Graded champ finals. Jessie Harding will contest the women's D grade, Olivia Gray will contest the women's C grade and Jason Haitana the men's D grade. They will also be part of the Central team trying to defend the district title. They will be playing alongside the New Zealand open national champs with several games live streamed.

Ruapehu beats Marist



Ruapehu Rugby and Sports Club's senior team beat Marist in Whanganui on Saturday, 10-38. Tries to Logan Blackburn (1), Jaydis Hammond (1), Kahl Elers-Green (1), Rangihæreroa Mcleod (2), Te Orangi Te Riaki (1). Conversions Jack Pettersson (3) Logan Blackburn (1). The semifinal of the championship is this weekend vs Marist Celtic at Rochfort Park in Ohakune, 1pm. Photo: Shayna Te Riaki.

Seeking history buffs

The Waimarino Museum Society needs help from fans of history.

The Annual General Meeting of the Society is being held at Raetihi Senior Elder Care Centre Lounge Seddon Street Raetihi, and the Society invites interested people to attend.

"The Society is in need of extra support from the community to help the group of very devoted members with this task," says secretary Noeline Churton.

"The membership needs to increase for the Society to be able to increase opening hours and preservation of the items entrusted to the Society by past and present people who lived or are living in the area."

"The Society is looking for people who are able to volunteer some time to the community so that the Museum can be available to the community for longer times in the future."

Last year two executive members who have done many years of service for the Waimarino Museum committee stood down but are back this past year helping the Society.

Anyone with queries or who would like to get more information is invited to contact the Secretary on 027-244-5226.



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Funding secured for 99-metre Te Hangaruru bridge

The next section of Te Hangaruru – the shared trail destined to link Waimarino/National Park and Horopito – will take a step closer, thanks to \$1.35 million in government funding being secured.

Part of the new section will include a new 99-metre suspension bridge.

The trail is part of the Mountains to Sea - Ngā Ara Tūhono Cycle Trail, running from Tongariro National Park to the Tasman Sea at Whanganui and operated by the Ngā Ara Tūhono Charitable Trust.

Trail manager Lynley Twyman said about 1.1km of trail between Pokaka and the Last Spike would be completed, but most of the money was going towards the bridge “which will be spectacularly amazing”.

“The most important thing for us is it starts to close the gap between Waimarino, formerly known as National Park, and Horopito,” she said.

“There will still be around 10 or 11 kilometres that we don’t have trail over, but we are working closely with our iwi partners on that at the moment.

“Then I’ll have to see where I can find a magic money tree.”

The latest funding is part of a \$10.8m package from the International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy the

Government announced in November.

About 9.1km of the Te Hangaruru trail opened in June last year.

“We built as far as we could go with the money we had, really stretching every dollar, and we were 1.1km short,” Twyman said.

“But we’ve costed it and done all that work, so we’ll be in the ground before you know it, with the intention to be open for Labour Weekend [October 24].”

The Ngā Ara Tūhono Charitable Trust is a partnership between the Whanganui and Ruapehu district councils and four iwi.

Twyman said the suspension bridge would be built between the rail and road bridges over the Manganui o te Ao River, adding “another incredible attraction”.

“Some people love looking at trains, but I’m looking forward to a spectacular view of Mt Ruapehu and, on a super clear day, Mt Taranaki.”

The next stage of the trail, which would be 29.4km when completed, would go under State Highway 4 and into the proposed Pōkākā Eco Sanctuary, a project by Te Korowai o Wainuiārua, Twyman said.

“Then it will connect up to Marton Sash and Door [trail].



A 99-metre suspension bridge (artist's impression pictured) will be part of the next trail stage. Image / Abseil Access and Mountains to Sea Great Ride.

“We are a little way from that at the moment, but getting to Last Spike is a significant outcome.”

Another Government funding pack-

age of \$2.197m, announced in May, will go towards upgrading the Ohakune Old Coach Rd section of the Mountains to Sea trail and replacing 13 bridges along the Mangapurua and Kaiwhakauka

tracks.

Planning is still under way on the extension of Te Ara Mangawhero – between Ohakune and Massey Flat on the Ohakune Mountain Road.



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Waimarino Eldercare Lounge
Seddon St, Raetihi

An invitation to all people in the Raetihi and Ohakune to attend this meeting to assist and help us to preserve the history of this area.

GUEST SPEAKER
Patron - Colin Fredricksen

Agenda
Chairperson Report
Financial Report
Election of officers
Subscriptions \$10

Noeline Churton, Secretary. 027 2445226



MO TE KATO A MARAE

Notice of Special General Meeting

Nominations are now being sought for one Trustee position to join the governance of Mō Te Katoa Marae.

This is an opportunity for whānau to contribute to the future direction of our Marae and assist with important governance decisions that support the aspirations and wellbeing of our people.

Date: Saturday, 11 July 2026
Time: 11.00am – 1.00pm
Venue: The Centre, 14 Seddon St, Raetihi
Zoom link:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87403237943?pwd=yiAiB6EjzRDOID71buAASRwZ1ECoYq.1>
Passcode: Mtkm1


Agenda:

- Appointment of one additional Trustee
- Update on bridge and Wharekai projects

Nominations:
All nominations must be received in writing no later than 14 days prior to the SGM, being Saturday, 27 June 2026.

For further information or to submit a nomination, please email The Secretary at: motekatoamarae1@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICES



Ruapehu District Council
Te Kaunihera-ā-Rohe o Ruapehu
Boards and Committees
UPCOMING MEETING DATES

Agendas are published on our Public Portal two working days before each scheduled meeting.

To speak at our Public Forum and share your thoughts directly with Elected Members, please contact our Governance team at governance@ruapehudc.govt.nz.

All meetings are livestreamed and can be found on the Ruapehu District Council website under the Agendas & Livestream icon on the main page.

Risk & Assurance Committee Meeting
11AM, Monday 6 July 2026
War Memorial Hall, 149 Hakiaha Street, Taumarunui

Ōwhango-National Park Community Board
6PM, Tuesday 7 July 2026
The Waimarino Conference Room, The Park Hotel Ruapehu, Cnr State Highway 4 & Millar Street, Waimarino

Waimarino-Waiouru Community Board
6PM, Thursday 30 July 2026
Waimarino Baptist Church (The Centre), 14 Seddon Street, Raetihi

Extraordinary Taumarunui-Ōhura Community Board
12PM, Monday 27 July 2026
Online

Ruapehu District Council
10AM, Wednesday 29 July 2026
Council Chambers, Huia Street, Taumarunui

MEETING CONTACTS

Ruapehu District Council	07 895 8188
Taumarunui-Ōhura Community Board	
Molly Jeffries, Chairperson	021 431 833
Ōwhango-National Park Community Board	
Peter Zimmer, Chairperson	027 479 1926
Waimarino-Waiouru Community Board	
John (Luigi) Hotter, Chairperson	027 274 2616
Risk & Assurance Committee	
Philip Jones, Chairperson	027 499 9408

SITUATIONS VACANT



Mo Te Whānau Te Kōhanga Reo – Raetihi

Kaiwhakahaere (Administrator)
15 Hours per Week

Mo Te Whānau Te Kōhanga Reo is seeking an organised, reliable and motivated Kaiwhakahaere (Administrator) to support the day-to-day administration, financial management and compliance requirements of our kōhanga.

This is a part-time position (15 hours per week) working closely with the Chairperson, Whānau Komiti and Kaimahi to ensure the smooth operation of the kōhanga.

The successful applicant will preferably have experience with:

- EDGE Student Management System
- Smartly Payroll
- Xero Accounting Software

Key responsibilities include administration, payroll support, financial processing, record management, reporting, meeting administration, and supporting communication with whānau and kaimahi.

Applicants should have excellent organisational skills, attention to detail, strong computer skills, the ability to work independently, and a commitment to maintaining confidentiality. Knowledge of Te Kōhanga Reo kaupapa and tikanga Māori would be an advantage.

To apply, please send your CV and a brief cover letter to: **Lou Bridger, Chairperson**
Mo Te Whānau Te Kōhanga Reo
Email: lou.bridger@xtra.co.nz
Applications close: Monday 6 July 2026

Out of the ashes: Ohakune Mardi Gras 30 years on

The Ohakune Mountain Mardi Gras arose from the ash clouds of the eruption-disrupted 1996 snow season. It was conceived as a way of lifting the spirits of beleaguered locals, providing images other than catastrophe, and as a financial boost to an industry in serious trouble.

Following is an outline of the event and its Trust, provided by OECT chair Janelle Hinch:

- It was a fitting and successful response to a natural disaster by a resilient, resourceful and creative community that created a brilliant and enduring event during a very damaging and stressful period.

The Mardi Gras was initially overseen by the Ohakune 2000 group and it was their hard work, vision and commitment that drove the event onwards to become a more sophisticated, well patronized and multifaceted production. The Ohakune Mardi Gras rapidly became firmly entrenched as the North Islands most popular winter street party and it was growing year by year. The events' increasing popularity and growing size started to create quite a workload for the members of the Ohakune 2000 group, so they decided to form a committee to work exclusively on the Mardi Gras.

This committee began the process of establishing itself as a Trust Board and with its application successfully became the Ohakune Events Charitable Trust (OECT). A Deed of Trust was established that formalised the objectives, scope and outcomes of the OECT. The Trust's main aims and objects were to be a charitable benefit to the community, assist with the promotion of the area and to enable the continued success of OMG.

The continuing success of the event and the increase in the numbers of people attending year by year had the extremely positive outcome of creating a surplus of funds held by the OECT. The committee decided that when an agreed level of financial stability was achieved, that disbursement of funds back to the community by way grants would commence. The idea that funds derived from an event created by the community to help sustain its members during a time of hardship would be disbursed back into that community was a very pleasing prospect for all concerned.

OECT was then able to start funding community projects or activities that adhered to the outlines set down in their Deed, as well as help other charitable organisation that benefited the community and to support local projects that provided education, training or employment activities. OECT also became involved in the establishment of a village green area at the Ohakune Junction, which aided in the rehabilitation of the Junction and created a more robust and viable site for the OMG.

The annual OMG provides economic and social benefits to Ohakune and the Ruapehu region at the very start of the winter snow season and gets the winter underway with a positive, vibrant, entertaining event. It provides direct fundraising opportunities to Ohakune and Raetihi Primary Schools and other groups such as the Waimarino Pony Club and the Ohakune Volunteer Fire Brigade.

Since achieving financial stability in 2010 and within its capacity as a charitable trust, OECT has been able to provide funding to a wide range of community projects, including: contribution to Ohakune Old Coach Road signage; Junction Apres Zone – contribution to Village Green Project; Ohakune Kindergarten – contribution to Early Childhood Centre; St John Ambulance – contribution to Ohakune Ambulance Station build; Junction street light upgrade; Local Educators Group – contribution to Point England School Visit; St John Ambulance – training room resources; Ohakune Skateboard Bowl – contribution towards build.

OECT directs its event managers to engage locally-based goods and service suppliers whenever possible. This results in many local businesses deriving a direct financial gain from involvement in OMG.

Next Raetihi Market
 TODAY TUESDAY 5 AUGUST 1997
 Old Bank of New Zealand building,
 Seddon Street, Raetihi.
 9.00 am to 3.00 pm.
 Stallholders welcomed at \$5.00.
 Phone 385 4947.

RUAPEHU
BULLETIN
 VOICE OF THE RUAPEHU REGION

5 August 1997

Carrots and mardi gras both go off with a bang

Ohakune was abuzz on Saturday with a very successful Carrot Carnival in the early part of the day and an "awesome" Mountain Mardi Gras at the Junction by night.

With the ski fields providing some good skiing, the carrot carnival was once again a time for the locals and visitors from neighbouring towns.

The stage at the Bakery Building carpark provided a focus with lots of activity there; a near-record number of stalls offered wares of all kinds; and later the Ohakune Growers Association parade provided entertainment around the streets.

Freezing temperatures seemed little bother for the many performers and most spectators were glad that there was no sign of rain.

No chilling out
 Even colder temperatures did nothing to chill the mood at the Mountain Mardi Gras in Thames Street, although the programme was delayed until sufficient numbers arrived. The crowd rapidly grew to an estimated 4000 people.

"The organisers — all volunteers — did a fantastic job bringing such a big event with so many components together," said Ruapehu marketing manager Bruce Rollinson. He said as a sponsor, he was very pleased with the result and was sure the other sponsors felt the same.

He said the crowd was quite different to last year's which was mostly locals, while this year the many locals were joined by a lot of visitors.

Comper, comedian Mark Wright, was really pleased to have been involved in the festival which he said was comparable to the Queenstown festival, said Mr Rollinson.

One negative aspect was the Christchurch Wizard, whose monologue prompted calls for him to "go away" when he expounded at length on his philosophies and past feats.

However, the mood of the crowd was quickly revived by the fireworks and acts such as the Ohakune Dance Troupe, the Mermaids of Paradise Polynesian entertainers, and the hilarious, well-practised but decidedly undainty 'Beeees Boys of the Dance - Creekdance'. The band Kantuta provided a warming Latin American flavour later.

Winner of the trip to Canada was Cam Feast from Auckland; the mystery escape, John Mason from Papakura; the Turoa season pass, Mike Lindsay from Whangarei; and the Whakapapa 7-day pass, Turn to Page 2



Sam Roke gets into the Ohakune school rock 'n' roll act Saturday morning.



Gettin' down with the clown at the mardi-gras on Saturday night — a good way to get warm!



Front page of the Ruapehu Bulletin, August 1997 — highlighting the second Ohakune Mardi Gras. The early years were very much a community effort. At right: Beeees Boys perform a Rocky Horror Show item in 2006.



MARDI GRAS



New Zealand's biggest winter dress-up party returns to Ohakune this weekend!

Saturday 4th July 2026
 Event Hours: 3:00PM – 11:00PM

ROAD CLOSURES WILL BE IN PLACE FROM 1:00PM ON SATURDAY, FROM LEE STREET TO THE JUNCTION.

IF YOU LIVE WITHIN THIS AREA PLEASE USE THE CAR PASS POSTED TO YOUR LETTERBOX. IF YOU HAVE NOT RECIEVED A PASS, YOU CAN COLLECT ONE FROM TUROA HQ LOCATED ON THE CORNER OF AYR AND GOLDFINCH.

Stay up to date with all event information by checking our official social media pages for the latest announcements and updates.



Thank you for supporting Mardi Gras 2026 and helping us keep everyone safe.





Biggest lesson from eruptions was relationships

From Page 1

near misses involving skiers and others on the mountain, exposing the challenges of managing risk in a national park.

They also uncovered gaps in volcanic risk management, highlighting what was, by today's standards, a fragmented emergency response.

Thirty years on, while science and technology advances have boosted the ability to detect and respond to volcanic unrest, there's also been a cultural change.

Volcanic risk management is no longer viewed purely as a scientific problem.

Richard Smith, director of the Natural Hazards and Resilience research programme Te Pae Turoa, says front of mind today is the importance of building and maintaining relationships across emergency planners and communities of risk.

Relationships ahead

"We can't be calling people up at 3am if we don't know them. We need to have those relationships well ahead of time."

The eruptions showed researchers and scientists that a broader range of information was needed to manage volcanic risk effectively, Smith says.

"The communities themselves have knowledge to share. A lot of that communication comes down to relationships."

Geoff Kilgour, chief scientist of Volcanic Hazards at Earth Sciences NZ, says one of the greatest legacies of the eruptions is the trust built over the past three decades between scientists, emergency planning agencies and locals.

"We're a much better-connected community. Our science is better at understanding things, then

we pass that information on to the Department of Conservation (DOC), the Civil Defence sector and even into Police and FENZ.

"We're much better prepared, we know who to contact, we know who to inform and who to talk to. It's all looking really good."

Totally inadequate

Dr Harry Keys, a DOC scientist during the eruptions, says emergency plans existed in 1995 but were not well rehearsed and communication between agencies was difficult, largely relying on fax machines.

"Plans, procedures and policies were totally inadequate," Keys said.

One of the biggest needs was to be able "to talk to people – the police, the councils, the skifield", Keys says. Co-ordination needed improvement.

He says those involved in the emergency response soon identified a need for trusted professional relationships built before an emergency.

"Relationships work in real time. I'm talking about the first minutes, hour, two hours, five hours, when you have to have to make a series of decisions very quickly. There's got to be quick communication."

Deeper relationships with mana whenua were also integral to an effective response. Keys says collaboration with iwi leaders of the time, such as Ngāti Rangi's Matiu Mareikura and Sir Tumu Te Heuheu, then paramount chief of Ngāti Tūwharetoa, brought a sense of calm and reassurance for many in the community, including himself.

Vulcanologist Graham Leonard, general manager of the Geological Hazards Science Mission at Earth Sciences, says response planning is now co-ordinated among scientists, the monitoring

agency, mana whenua, emergency managers, infrastructure providers and DOC through volcanic advisory groups.

"It's something that was wanting in 1995/1996 – having a co-ordinated view of everyone's plans, questions and needs."

Collaborative

Leonard says volcanic management has continued to become more collaborative, today integrating mana whenua knowledge alongside scientific and emergency management to better understand and respond to volcanic hazard.

"Mana whenua are closest to the volcano and its activity, and have a whakapapa connection, so they have a very strong interest.

"They're also really attuned to what's going on in the environment and the volcano. They've got their own perspectives and a very, very long history of observation. It's a very structured, careful, methodical observation across generations – and that's science."

Leonard says that "all-of-te-taiao" worldview considered alongside the "mathematical science" enhances risk management.

"They're different knowledge systems but also really beneficial worldviews. Bringing those things beside each other enhances the mana of both, and we can learn from the two."

Risk comes from humans

Science has learned much from the Māori perspective on natural hazards, Leonard says.

"When we're talking about a volcano, when we're talking about Koro [Ruapehu], this is what he naturally does. This is a beautiful and natural phenomena and behaviour. It is what we choose

to do as humans – where we choose to live, how we choose to engineer and where we choose to go – that creates hazard and risk.

"[Risk] really comes from humans, not the natural environment, and it puts the onus on them to think about their risk management."

There were also lessons to learn about resilience, Leonard says

"Risk management really is an intergenerational thing. What are we doing now for future decades of future generations to be resilient?"

"That is very similar to kaitiakitanga, and that Te Ao Māori worldview. The more we think about where and how we're building, and where we're choosing to go – living in harmony with te taiao, with nature and with volcanoes' way – the more we're becoming resilient to risk. Māori already have that as an inherent value and worldview."

Ngāti Rangi environment and cultural development team leader Deanna Wilson says she feels at peace living at the foot of her ancestral maunga.

"I'm always in awe of our maunga. It doesn't feel like there is activity, even though we know that there is – he's a living being – and so I never, ever feel afraid."

But she says there's room for iwi to take a bigger role in helping communities prepare for and respond to natural hazards.

"I don't think we have enough of a role at the moment. We're working with the council through our relationships that we've developed since the [treaty] settlements. More and more, we're having more of an input into the processes."

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

Out of the ashes: Ohakune Mardi Gras 30 years on



Fur Patrol at the 2001 Mardi Gras – widely noted as a turning point in the flavour of the event.



Fireworks in 2006 – a main feature in early events.



Regular Mardi Gras fan Paul Beckett suits up in 2016.



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