

Press release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Blessing of the Boats 2026 Cancelled, But Community Celebrations Continue at Island Bay Festival

Island Bay, Wellington — February 2026

The Island Bay Festival organisers have announced that the 2026 Blessing of the Boats will not go ahead, following advice from Wellington Water and Wellington City Council regarding the current Moa Point wastewater discharge.

With public health and safety as the top priority, the decision has been made to cancel this year's water-based blessing. Organisers acknowledge the disappointment this will bring to many in the community, as the Blessing of the Boats is a deeply cherished Island Bay tradition.

"This was not a decision taken lightly," said festival organisers. "The Blessing of the Boats holds deep meaning for our community, but given the current conditions, it would not be appropriate to proceed. We're committed to doing the right thing by our people and our bay, and we look forward to welcoming the blessing back in 2027 when it can be celebrated safely."

Community members are also reminded to stay off the beach and out of the water while conditions remain unsafe. Further information is available via Wellington Water.

Despite the cancellation, organisers emphasise that the Island Bay Festival – Day in the Bay will still go ahead as planned, with a full programme of vibrant, land-based events celebrating the suburb's strong community spirit. Full event details can be found at:

<https://www.islandbayfestival.org.nz/tangata-manu-birdman-beach-party>

The popular Tangata Manu Birdman Beach Party has been relocated to Shorland Park and will now take place on Friday 13 February, ensuring the fun continues in a safe and accessible way. Full event details can be found at:

<https://www.islandbayfestival.org.nz/tangata-manu-birdman-beach-party>

In addition, much-loved festival events such as the Island Bay Garage Sale and the Crop Swap and Clothing Swap events, all on Saturday 14 February will proceed as scheduled.

More information on these great events can be found here:

<https://www.islandbayfestival.org.nz/garagesale>

"The heart of the festival is our people," organisers said. "Even without water-based events, Island Bay will be buzzing with connection, creativity, and celebration. We can't wait to see neighbours, families, and visitors coming together to enjoy everything that makes this community so special."

The Island Bay Festival organisers thank the community for their understanding and continued support and look forward to celebrating together on land this year — and back on the water in 2027.

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