



Opotiki District Council  
STRONG COMMUNITY STRONG FUTURE

# Pānui

Issue 97 // April 2024

Keeping you up to date with Opotiki District Council

## The Mayor on the Long Term Plan

There is no easy Long Term Plan but this year's plan has certainly been one of our most difficult. Your councillors and I are balancing the need to continue important council operations with unprecedented cost increases in local government, at the same time keeping rates to a minimum for households in the district facing a very real cost-of-living crisis.

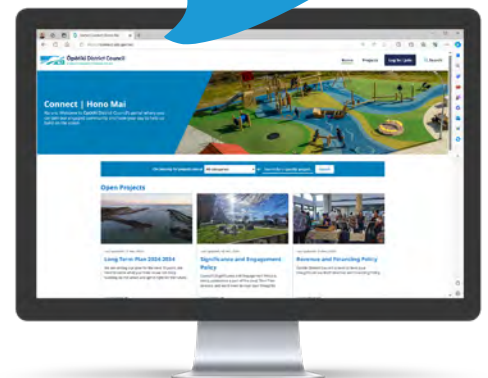
We have made savings in all sorts of places – no new capital expenditure, minimal maintenance and renewal, limiting spend on depreciation or revaluation of our assets. We have also proposed reductions to some council services to further reduce costs. Earlier this year, we had a significant response from our community about where those reductions in services should be made, so thank you to everyone who got involved, talked to councillors, and provided feedback.

The draft that we will be bringing to the community for consultation later this year proposes reductions in levels of service across several areas of council: engineering (non-urgent operational and maintenance), parks and reserves, and isite/events.



There will be opportunities to provide feedback during June and July on whether we have the balance about right. You can sign up on the website so you get updates in your inbox when submissions open. You can also talk to your elected representatives about it at any time.

[www.connect.odc.govt.nz](http://www.connect.odc.govt.nz)



## Harbour update

The completion of the Opotiki harbour is moving ever closer, with dredging still under way and river closure dune works continuing. The project is on track to be completed (excluding final reinstatement works and commencement of wetland plantings) in the coming months. The full four-metre draft out through the channel is expected to be open to boats by July followed by a formal opening and full public access to the seawalls, including parking and pedestrian access.

We are also currently considering options for interim use of the Opotiki wharf to allow mussel boats to tie up while the long-term marina option gets up to speed. We have carried out some early analysis including load testing on the older section, spaces for truck movements and turning areas. We will continue to work with key stakeholders including Coastguard, Whakatōhea Opotiki Mussels and the wider public to find the best way forward.



# Need help paying your rates?

If you own a property in the Ōpōtiki district, you are legally required to pay the rates on that property. We know that this can be difficult sometimes and there are services that can help.

## RATES REBATES

You may be eligible for a rates rebate through the government scheme of up to \$700, but you need to apply. The amount depends on a combination of your income, the amount of rates you are charged and the number of dependants you have. You can only apply for one rebate a year but you can apply any time throughout the rating year (so you have until 1 July to apply for this year). Our rates staff know the process well and are happy to help you through it. Find out more by giving us a call or checking out the process on our website.

## RATES REMISSION

We have a policy on rates remission and postponement if you find yourself in extreme hardship. Full details of our policies and how to apply are on our website along with an online application form.

## MĀORI FREEHOLD LAND

In 2021, changes were made to national legislation around the rules for rating of Māori land. There are some significant changes around historical arrears, Ngā Whenua Rāhui, wholly unused land, and multiple land blocks from the same parent block. You can read more about what this may mean for owners of freehold Māori land and link to an online application form on our website.

## PAYMENT PLAN

If you think you are going to have trouble paying your rates on time, please do not hesitate to contact Council to discuss the issue; phone 07 3153030 and ask for the rates team.



## Rates arrears

If you still haven't paid your rates, those debts are called 'rates arrears'. Council is currently owed more than \$3m in outstanding rates. This makes a big difference for those that pay rates on time as their rates are higher to cover this added cost.

Council has some options to recover rates arrears. Our staff work very hard to make arrangements with property owners to pay off rates arrears. However, as a last resort, if there is a mortgage on a property, council can ask the bank to pay the overdue rates from the customer's account. If a property is mortgage-free, we use other legal means to follow up that debt. In rare cases, this can include using the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 to force the sale of a property in order to recover unpaid rates.

## Kerbside recycling



Since February this year, there have been a few changes to what we recycle in our kerbside recycling as part of the national work to standardise recycling across Aotearoa. There aren't too many changes for us here in Ōpōtiki, but if you have any questions about rubbish and recycling, Refuse Recovery Centres, and what happens to your waste, don't hesitate to check out our website.

[www.odc.govt.nz/rubbish](http://www.odc.govt.nz/rubbish)

## Only put these things in your recycling bin



Plastic bottles, trays and containers numbered 1, 2 and 5 only



Food and drink tins and cans



Paper and cardboard



Glass bottles and jars

The rules have changed in Ōpōtiki. Get up to date on recycling right at [www.odc.govt.nz](http://www.odc.govt.nz)







# THANKS FOR SHARING YOUR THOUGHTS ON TE TĀHUHU O TE RANGI

Last year, Te Tāhuhu o Te Rangi started work on the library's three-year plan to help set priority areas, outline things working well and things that could be better. Part of this process was a survey to better understand the needs and wants of library users.

There was plenty of amazing feedback with some thoughtful insight and inspiring quotes.

"It gives a lift to the town and it's a cool space to be in. It's not just about a flash new building, it's the overall vibe. It's a place that belongs to Ōpōtiki."

"It's lovely to see everyone in there, from the youngest babes to the oldest kaumātua."



You can read the full report on Councils website [www.odc.govt.nz/library](http://www.odc.govt.nz/library).



## Calling all Matariki idea-makers

Each year for Matariki, staff at Ōpōtiki isite coordinates a calendar of events that stretches over several weeks to educate, celebrate, and mark the annual rising of Matariki (star cluster) & Te Tau Hou Māori (Māori New Year).

Planning for the annual Ōpōtiki Matariki Festival is in full swing, promising an exciting lineup from June 28th, coinciding with the Matariki Public Holiday, through to July 14th. This year's festival is thoughtfully timed to include the first week of school holidays, making it ideal for families near and far.

Past events have included night walks, stargazing, storytelling, music, dance performances, art exhibitions, Ki o Rahi tournaments, sports events, workshops, markets, and the grand finale night concert and fireworks. However, fresh ideas and events are always welcomed! The festival continues to evolve, so feel free to share your suggestions with us.

As the community comes together to celebrate Matariki, the Māori New Year, it's a wonderful opportunity to reflect, remember, and look forward with hope. We're interested to hear how you and your whānau plan to celebrate Matariki this year.

If you have an idea for an event or want to know more, get in touch with the friendly team at the isite to get involved.



## Community voices at the council table

2024 REPRESENTATION REVIEW

## Changing the way our council is structured

**Māu e āwhina ki te whiriwhiri me pēhea tōu reo e rongō ai i te kaunihera. You can help decide how your voice will be heard at the council table.**

Council voted to implement Māori wards in 2023, so we now need to consider how we represent community voices at the council table with Māori wards included. This is our Representation Review.

There is a lot to think about – how many councillors we want to have, whether we want more or fewer community boards, whether we want 'wards' or elect members 'at large' (or a combination), the boundaries and names of these wards.

You can provide your feedback online or in one of our drop-in sessions held throughout the district. Find out more about the representation review and have your say at [www.connect.odc.govt.nz](http://www.connect.odc.govt.nz)



# In brief

Did you know Ōpōtiki has its own **Repair Café**? These incredible volunteers are available on the last Saturday of each month and help reduce our impact on the planet by fixing small appliances, stringed instruments, mending clothing, knife sharpening, replacing watch batteries, fixing furniture and toys, and more. Keep up to date with events and ideas on their Facebook page @Opotiki Repair Café.

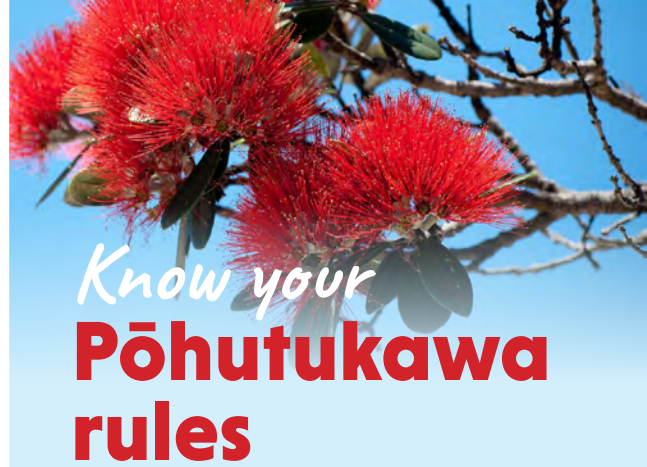
Warm up your autumn days with one of Ōpōtiki's incredible range of **community and special-interest groups**. Why not try something new this year? Have a look at the list of amazing groups including Scottish country dancing, indoor bowls, meditation, sound-healing, walking groups, sewing groups and music groups. With things like meet-and-greet for senior citizens or storytime at the library for the young ones, there is something for everyone. Find out more from the team at Ōpōtiki isite.

Council has recently formalised how we deal with customers through a **Customer Charter** and a **Complaints Policy**. The Complaints policy makes it clear what a formal complaint looks like and how it will be dealt with. It is different to a 'service request' or a LGOIMA, a suggestion, a formal process (like a building consent), or a phone call about an everyday matter. It is a formal process that sets out timelines, roles and responsibilities inside council when a member of the public is dissatisfied with a council action, process, decision, or staff member.

Council is looking at the **Ōpōtiki Wastewater Treatment Plant** and how well it will continue to serve us into the future. We're doing this at the same time we are working on our consent for 'discharge to land' at the wastewater treatment plant. The consent with the regional council expires in 2025 and we are working through the new consent process now, so it is a great time to carefully consider possible upgrades and development options. You can find out more about the Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade project at [www.connect.odc.govt.nz](http://www.connect.odc.govt.nz)

## Farewell to Anna

This month, we say a fond farewell to Group Manager Community Services and Development, Anna Hayward. In her years at council, Anna and her team have led many projects big and small that have benefited the district. She kept community outcomes and a long-term vision for Ōpōtiki front and centre of all we do. We wish her all the best for her next challenges.



## Know your Pōhutukawa rules

**If you have a pōhutukawa tree on your property, there are a few important rules you need to know before you prune or remove them.**

Pōhutukawa are protected under the Ōpōtiki District Plan which means, even if you are doing work to keep the tree safe and healthy, you need to involve council before you get to work. You'll also need to engage a qualified person (an arborist) to explain what needs to happen and how. And you must lodge that explanation with council before work gets underway. If you don't, you have to get resource consent, which is a much lengthier process.

It goes without saying that trees of any kind on public land are the responsibility of the landowner, usually council or the Department of Conservation, regional council, or Waka Kotahi. Any damage to those trees without first talking to the landowner is illegal and may be prosecuted.



# No data? No problem.

Zero.govt.nz has you covered.

