



Ōpōtiki District Council
STRONG COMMUNITY STRONG FUTURE

Pānui

Issue 98 // April 2025

Keeping you up to date with Ōpōtiki District Council

Changes to council invoices

If you've missed your quarterly quotient of council news and updates, you'll be pleased to see this Pānui back in your inbox or mailbox.

Last year, between later-than-usual invoicing (because of delays to our Long Term Plan) and the move to just two invoices each year, the colourful Pānui was replaced by other important notifications and messages with your rates notices.

But it's back, for at least this edition. This Pānui arrives with your final invoice for this year and payment is due by 20 May.

The new rating year starts on 1 July 2025, and that means from then on you will receive just two invoices each year:

Invoice 1	(combined with your assessment) sent in mid August with payment due 20 September
Invoice 2	sent in mid February with payment due 20 March .

Don't forget, if you are signed up for direct debit, the annual rates bill will be divided up into regular weekly, fortnightly, monthly or even quarterly payments to suit you.

Did you know it is now almost \$3 to send a letter?!



We encourage you to sign up to receive your rates invoices by email – that way its all at your fingertips along with links to payment pages, internet banking, or more information if you need it.

Any questions or concerns for the coming year, please get in touch with council by email, online or give us a call.

From the Mayor

It has been a long summer and it is starting to feel very dry underfoot – it is certainly getting tougher for farmers and gardeners. The settled weather has been good for fishing although I have had much less time to fish than I would have liked! But I have enjoyed a summer of family time, particularly with the grandkids. Thanks to the many community groups and individuals who provide so many events and activities here to keep us all so busy.

It's been great to see activity happening around the harbour. The mussel boats have had some successful trials at the wharf and the upgrades are complete. Other features like navigation lights, parking, cameras, and community areas are really looking great and are well used.

Dredging is still full steam ahead, with more dredged in the last couple of months than in the whole of the project to date. There is still more to go, but the end is in sight.

If you are wondering where the dredged materials end up, the answer is they are filling the old rivermouth on the western side of Pākihikura. That area now offers an incredible restoration opportunity, potentially the largest dune restoration project ever undertaken in New Zealand. I'm sure you'll be hearing more about this area and the wildlife and plant life that is flourishing. A few new photos of the work that has gone into it are on the council website.

Please do take care in the area and keep it free of vehicles and animals. The dunes are still very fragile and will need our support for some years to come.

David Moore, Ōpōtiki Mayor



Whakatōhea Tiaki Taio team planting.

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 \$790, 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.



Across the motu, you will have been hearing all about **Local Water Done Well**. Just like other councils up and down the country, Ōpōtiki needs to consider how we want to manage (and pay for) the provision of wastewater, stormwater and water supply services in the district. This will matter to you whether you are on a council-run scheme, or whether you are on a small community or individual system.

So keep your eye out for this important conversation, learn more about three waters in Ōpōtiki, and have your say when consultation opens.

Council drop-in sessions

Do you have a question for council? During April and May this year, council has a few big projects on the go, and community feedback is vital to making sure they reflect what the community wants.

Councillors and staff will be available on 7 and 8 May in downtown Ōpōtiki and Te Kaha to answer any questions or share important information on council activities. Local Water Done Well (how we structure and pay for our Three Water Services) or our revised Waste Minimisation and Management Plan (what we do with our rubbish and recycling), planning, regulations, applying for rates rebates, making sure you and your whānau are prepared for a civil defence emergency, or just finding out how our wastewater treatment plant works.

Find out more and pop in for a chat!

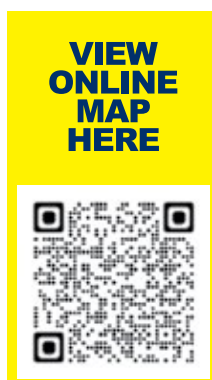
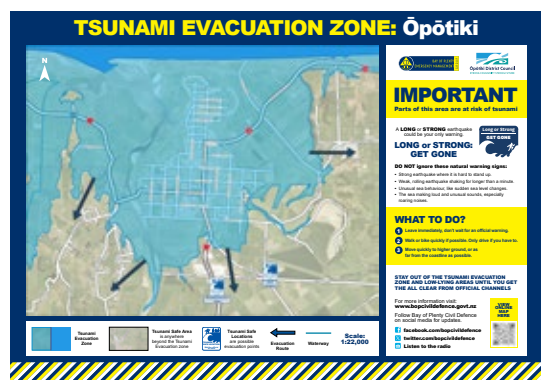
GET OUT OF THE BLUE!

We all know the important saying “long, strong, get gone”. If you are near the coast and you feel an earthquake that lasts more than a minute OR makes it hard to stand up, this is a natural tsunami warning and you should get to the nearest high ground or inland immediately (don’t wait for official warnings).

The next instruction is just as important – “get out of the blue”. The previous tsunami maps for the Ōpōtiki coastline had red, orange, and yellow zones to reflect different tsunami sizes. But the newer maps, while covering a similar area, are much easier to understand – simply get out of the blue. All the zones in blue could be affected by a tsunami.

Make sure you check the maps for where you live, work and play. Know an escape route and practise it. In a large earthquake, get out of the blue areas on foot or bike. Stay there until the official all-clear.

You can find out more about how you can stay informed in an emergency and how you can plan and prepare at getready.govt.nz



GET SET. GET REGISTERED.

Elections

Elections are this October. Don't miss this important opportunity to have your say in the local democracy!

Right now, its time to make sure you are enrolled and all your details are correct so that you receive your postal ballot when it is sent out to you later in the year. Check your details at www.vote.nz.

Have you considered standing as a candidate to bring vital community views to the council table?

If you own property but don't live in Ōpōtiki, you may be eligible to register and vote as a Ratepayer Elector.

Find out more on our website - www.odc.govt.nz



In brief

The **Eastern Bay of Plenty Spatial Plan** is almost adopted and ready to go! You might remember consultation on this plan at the end of 2024. We used your feedback to help shape the plan and help align the long term growth strategies across the four councils. Now it is time to put these plans into action. For Ōpōtiki, a lot of our growth will happen in Hukutaia, so stay across any developments and opportunities to get involved on our website www.odc.govt.nz/hukutaia

If you submitted on the resource consent application from **Te Ara Tipuna Charitable Trust**, please check for an update from the applicants. The Charitable Trust has made the decision to restrict their application to just the Ngāti Porou rohe at this time. If your application relates to whenua in the Ōpōtiki district (anywhere west of Pōtaka) you are welcome to withdraw your submission. Details are on the Te Ara Tipuna website.

Would you like to see Council's plans for the future? The **2025/26 Annual Plan** sets out the plans, projects and costs for the coming year in detail. We are not asking for feedback on the Plan this year because it aligns so closely with the recently adopted 2024-2034 Long Term Plan (no material change). The Annual Plan Information Document is a summary of the full Annual Plan in an easier-to-read format. It will be available online from the end of April and the Annual Plan will be adopted and available online at the end of June. Check our website for the details.

Have you seen our new, easy-to-navigate websites?

The website for Te Tāhuhu o Te Rangi is looking great with all the same functionality – find books and resources, search for information about grants and funding, find links to genealogy research tools, watch hundreds of free movies and documentaries and so much more!

Visitors and locals alike will love the new look isite website for all the best information on what to do and what's on here in the Ōpōtiki District.

www.opotikin.co.nz



What's on

Brrrr – don't let the cooler autumn weather keep you away from some of the amazing community activities you can get involved with. Whether you want to learn more about the very active Repair Café or regular markets, join a walking group, join a friendship club, get the kids involved in Cadet's gymnastics, embroidery, cycling, snooker, dance, sewing and craft, or just social get togethers. There is so much to keep you warm, active and connected this winter.

Explore What's On in Ōpōtiki by visiting www.opotikin.co.nz or send the team an email (infocentre@odc.govt.nz) to sign up to the new What's On e-newsletter with all the latest events and activities. You can also use that email address to add an event you'd like to share with the community.

Ōpōtiki 

What's on



Meet the team

There have been a few changes in the senior management team here at council so it's a good time to meet our newest leaders.

Stace Lower
Chief Executive Officer



Antoinette Campbell
Group Manager – Strategy & Development and District Civil Defence Controller

The Strategy and Development portfolio includes all things planning, development and rules. This includes long-term and annual planning, spatial and land-use planning, assets planning, building and resources consents, environmental health and compliance, animal control, economic development, policies and bylaws, and planning for our public spaces and places.



Nathan Hughes
Group Manager – Service Delivery

The Service Delivery portfolio covers operations and projects for council infrastructure, three waters (wastewater, stormwater and water supply), roads and transport, rubbish and recycling, parks and reserves, operations of the new harbour, Te Tāhuhu o Te Rangi the Ōpōtiki District library, isite and events.



Rachael Burgess
Group Manager – Business Support

The Business Support portfolio is responsible for the efficient management of the Council's finance, property, governance, communications, information technology, human resources, and customer service operations.



You will receive this Pānui shortly before or after the Anzac civic ceremony on 25 April. Thanks to all those who acknowledged Anzac day in a meaningful way, making our current and retired service men and women proud, the gardens and crosses at the cenotaph were looking their usual lovely best, and it was a special day for the community.