



Road repair costs won't hit rates

We may be the sunshine capital of the North Island, but that doesn't stop the rain from falling.

In the past six months, two heavy rainfall events have created significant cleanup costs and caused new damage to the roading network.

In October 2011, heavy rain storms in the Herepuru and Waimana catchments caused numerous slips and road closures. The cost of managing the event and cleaning up afterwards came to \$183,000. Fortunately no permanent damage was done, so no additional repair costs were incurred.

The 2012 New Year period brought another heavy rainfall event hit, with the main impacts felt in the Waimana Valley and Ruatoki Valley catchments.

The costs of managing this event and cleaning up afterwards came to \$165,000, with the cost of repairing damage to roading infrastructure estimated at a further \$792,000.

Acting General Manager Infrastructure Paula Chapman says the good news is that those additional costs are able to be managed without requiring additional ratepayer funding.

"We have cost savings available from previous repair jobs which came in under budget and there are four other road repair projects that can be deferred because the damage involved is confined to road shoulders. Those funds, in conjunction with funding from the New Zealand Transportation Agency, will completely offset the additional costs."



As a result of the October 2011 storm event, the New Zealand Transportation Agency repair cost subsidy has risen from 48 percent to 53 percent and Paula says it is likely to increase further once NZTA has approved a funding request for the January 2012 event.

BY THE WAY...

Our community newsletter Byways is having a makeover. The publication will be smaller (usually just one page) and more frequent (once each month), so that we can ensure the content is as up-to-date as possible.

Keep an eye on upcoming issues for fresh and relevant news about the events and issues affecting our District... and a fresh new look.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tsunami sirens a step closer

Ōpōtiki District Council and Whakatāne District Council have put forward a joint application to the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management for additional fire sirens to work as a tsunami warning system.

The proposed system would see the conversion of existing New Zealand Fire Service sirens to enable a tsunami alerting system and the installation of a further three sirens.

If the proposal is successful, it will be backed by a public education campaign to ensure that residents know what action they should take when the continuous rise siren sounds.

New rules for building work

On 1 March 2012, the Department of Building and Housing's Restricted Building Work regulations came into effect.

If you're applying for a building consent you must make sure that the practitioners you use are correctly licensed to carry out any restricted building work.

Restricted building work applies to residential construction, alterations and design of houses and small-to-medium sized apartment buildings. It doesn't apply to any ancillary buildings such as garages or garden sheds or to commercial property.

Licensed building practitioners include designers, carpenters, external plasterers, brick and block layers, foundation specialists and roofers. Registered architects, gas-fitters and plumbers, as well as chartered professional engineers, who are registered with their own professional authorities, are also treated as being licensed.

If you are the homeowner it is your responsibility to check the people you are using are licensed for the type of Restricted Building Work you are having done.

To find out more about the changes visit www.builditright.govt.nz or www.dbh.govt.nz

Long Term Plan – Time to have your say

The Whakatane District Council's draft Long Term Plan (LTP) has now been adopted and information on this significant document will soon be appearing in mailboxes around the district.

The draft LTP sets out Council's proposed strategic direction, priorities and intended programme of work for the ten-year period from 1 July 2012 till 30 June 2022. A summary of the plan, and the policies and financial forecasts it is based on, will be delivered to all homes as an insert in the Bay Weekend newspaper on Saturday 17 March. Community input is a vital part of the planning process and submissions can be made on the draft Long Term Plan and draft Policies and Proposals documents at any time from Monday March 12 till 5.00pm, Friday April 13.

Councillors will then consider the submissions received at a series of hearings in early May before finalising and adopting the LTP later that month.

Mayor Tony Bonne says the draft plan provides important information about Council activities, the level of service the community can expect, what those

services will cost and how they will be paid for. "The Council is required to produce a long term plan every three years and this LTP is particularly significant, because it proposes some major changes in our rating and fees and charges policies."

Among the many changes envisioned are: a move to address rates affordability by balancing the 'user pays' approach introduced in recent years; reductions in building and consent fees to encourage economic development; and caps on future rate rises and borrowing limits.

"We would encourage all residents to read the Summary and give us their feedback so that we have a comprehensive picture of the community's views before we finalise the plan," Tony says.

Copies of the full draft Long Term Plan and Policies and Proposals document will be available at District Libraries and on the Council website www.whakatane.govt.nz from Monday March 12. Submission forms will also be available at Council offices and libraries or can be submitted via the Council's website.

District Plan review underway

While much of the Council's planning focus has been on the preparation of the draft Long Term Plan, we are also well-advanced on a review of the District Plan.

The District Plan sets out the rules that govern the way we use, subdivide and develop land in the District. It identifies where activities can take place (e.g. zones for residential, commercial and business development), what land can

be developed and what features (e.g. important landscapes and heritage buildings) should be protected. Consultation on a Draft District Plan occurred until late 2011 and the Council is steadily working through the suggestions received before notifying a Proposed District Plan for public consultation in June/July 2012.

Future editions will have more detail on the changes proposed.



Fancy a stroll along the Rangitāiki River?

Leisurely strolls along the banks of the Rangitāiki River are just around the corner with development of the Rangitāiki River Walkway underway.

The walkway will extend 2.7 kilometres from behind the Edgcombe Squash and Tennis Club through to Edgcombe Domain and will be able to be accessed at many points along the route.

Rangitāiki Community Board member Mrs Viv Barr says the walkway development has been coordinated through the Edgcombe Development and Improvement Team (E.D.I.T.).

"The initiative was identified as a priority project by the community at recent community vision meetings and E.D.I.T. and the Rangitāiki Community Board have taken on the task of coordinating the project," Viv says.