



OUR PLACE

Ko Konei

Your Whakatane District Council
Community Update - April 2020

Unite
against
COVID-19

COUNCIL SERVICES

Now that we are in Alert Level 4, there are changes to some Council services and facilities. If you need to contact the Council, you can:

- Call the Customer Services call centre on 07 306 0500
- Email info@whakatane.govt.nz
- Log a request for service on Council's website – www.whakatane.govt.nz

DRINKING WATER, WASTE WATER AND STORM WATER

Rest assured there will be no disruption to Whakatane District water supplies, waste water services and storm water management.

A reminder to not flush wipes of any type - including those branded 'flushable'! Sewerage systems nationwide are getting blocked as people continue to flush wet wipes.

Remember the three Ps – only poo, pee and [toilet] paper should be flushed.

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

As we navigate these unprecedented times and unite against COVID-19, it's essential that we be kind, stay home and save lives. It's really that simple. We are a resilient community, and we have become so through caring for and looking out for one another – now, more than ever, we need to continue to do this.

I would like to thank our government for their leadership, swift action and clear communication. Please stay connected to all advice that comes from the government through the Prime Minister and the National Emergency Management Agency. You can visit www.covid19.govt.nz for all COVID-19 information.

Whakatane District Council staff prepared for the eventuation of an Alert Level 4, and have now activated our Pandemic Plan. This plan ensures continuity of critical and essential services for our District – so that you have water in your taps, your rubbish is collected and you are protected from any natural events that may arise. However, moving to the provision of essential services means there are disruptions to Council's normal services and facilities.

All public facilities including Council offices, swimming pools, libraries, information centres, campgrounds, freedom camping sites, playgrounds and most public toilets are closed to the public until further notice. You can find more information in this edition of Ko Konei, or by visiting the Council website.

The Council has also set up an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). The EOC will operate virtually and support the wider Bay of Plenty and national emergency organisations to provide a coordinated response to COVID-19. Other organisations involved in the response include iwi, social service providers, businesses and contractors.

I appreciate these are extremely challenging times, and there will be ups and downs as we all find our 'new normal'. Remember to be kind to one another, and keep in touch with your friends and whānau to make sure they're okay. Whatever you're doing, you need to protect your bubble and everyone in it. Stay home wherever possible and if you have to go out, stay two metres away from anyone else. Please shop responsibly – there are enough supplies to go around, if everyone just buys what they need.

Thank you for your patience and understanding. Take care of each other and stay safe – we're all in this together.

Kia haumaru te noho, Mayor Judy Turner



WHAKATANE LIBRARIES

Our libraries are now closed. If you have books on loan, please keep them at home until we re-open. You won't be charged overdue fines or extra rental charges.

Now is a great time to make use of our eLibrary resources – you can download books and audiobooks, including a great range for children. These are available free to all library members via the library website – whakatane.govt.nz/library. If you don't have a library card, you're very welcome to join as a digital member! This will allow you to make full use of our eLibrary collection.

ANIMAL CONTROL SERVICES

Our Animal Control team will continue to manage the Pound and respond to dangerous and wandering dogs.

Remember your dog is part of your 'bubble'. Please keep your dog on a lead to avoid potential contact with other people and dogs while you're out walking. Be a responsible owner, and pick up any poo your dog leaves behind!

PUBLIC TOILETS

The majority of public toilets in our district are closed; however, some public toilets have been opened at the request of local Police for essential service workers' use only.

PLAYGROUNDS

Arohamai whānau - playgrounds are closed until further notice.

COUNCIL MEETINGS

All Community Board and Council meetings are postponed until further notice, although elected members continue to be updated via virtual platforms.

RUBBISH AND RECYCLING

- Your normal kerbside rubbish and greenwaste services will continue.
- Yellow-lidded recycling bins can be put out on your normal recycling collection days, but the contents will be taken to landfill instead of being recycled.
- Green glass crates will not be collected. You can put glass in your rubbish bin or yellow-lidded recycling bin and it will be taken to landfill.
- You can choose to keep your recycling and glass at home, and deliver it to the refuse transfer station when it re-opens.
- Whakatane and Murupara refuse transfer stations are closed, with no public access until further notice.
- If you don't have a kerbside service, you can take bagged household waste to bins provided at the transfer station gates from 9am to 3pm daily. Note: no large items, greenwaste or loose rubbish will be accepted. Please respect this.
- Waste from households with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 needs to be double-bagged, sealed and not put out for 72 hours.

The Murupara Refuse Transfer Station bin is located near Harakeke Road, on the campground side of Main Road.

BUILDING AND FOOD SAFETY INSPECTIONS

There will be no building inspections or food premises verifications until further notice.

BUSINESS SUPPORT

Toi-EDA and the Eastern Bay Chamber of Commerce have established the Eastern Bay Covid Business Support Hub. This initiative enables essential businesses to identify and advertise jobs and also provides up-to-date advice and information for all businesses during this time. Follow the Eastern Bay Covid Business Support Hub on Facebook or Instagram.

BOAT RAMPS

All boat ramps in the Bay of Plenty are now closed to recreational fishers until further notice. There will still be some dredging of the Whakatane rivermouth and commercial fishing activities.

This decision is made to help police enforce non-essential travel, and also to protect the safety of the Coastguard.

AIRPORT

Whakatane Airport is closed, but will remain operational for emergency purposes only.

CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM

The cemetery and crematorium are operational for burials and cremations, which must all be arranged through a funeral director. The chapel is closed to the public until further notice.

Cemeteries are public spaces and like all Council reserves, remain open. You can visit as long as you observe the Government's requirements around social distancing and gatherings of people.

Remember, the Government has also instructed you to remain within your own neighbourhood, so keep that in mind when making a decision whether or not to visit a cemetery.

CAMPGROUNDS AND FREEDOM CAMPING SITES

On direction from the government, all campgrounds and freedom camping sites are closed to the public until further notice. Council staff have been working with NZ Police to accommodate freedom campers who have found themselves unable to use these sites.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Council's communication and engagement team will still be on hand to keep you updated and informed, as well as answer media enquiries. You can keep up-to-date via Council's website, or on Council's social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram.

NEED HELP?

If you, or anyone you know, is finding it difficult to access food or essential household goods – such as blankets – please phone **0800 884 222** for help. This service is available 7am-7pm, 7 days a week.



WHAKAARI/WHITE ISLAND RECOVERY PROJECT

Message from the Recovery Manager

So much has happened in the world since our last update. It's difficult to believe it has only been four weeks.

Clearly, the primary focus for many of our partner agencies is now the response to COVID-19. Please be assured that Whakaari Recovery is not over, but under the current circumstances, it is proceeding at a reduced pace.

We feel especially for those still in hospital and those continuing their recovery at home or as outpatients – these people will be uppermost in many minds when we act on the message 'Stay home. Save lives.'

A couple of updates regarding Whakaari Recovery – the panel has completed work related to the emergency business grants process following the Whakaari eruption. For businesses requiring ongoing financial support with the COVID-19 event, further information is available at covid-19.govt.nz.

Also, GNS continues to monitor the island and will send out regular updates on the volcanic activity, even while we are under COVID-19 Alert Level 4. Whakaari remains at alert level 2 and further information is available at gns.cri.nz.

Noho ora mai

Craig Morris

BAF OF PLENTY CIVIL DEFENCE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT GROUP WHAKAARI RECOVERY MANAGER

Message from WorkSafe New Zealand - investigation update

Please be assured that while COVID-19 is a pressing concern for the public, WorkSafe remains committed and focussed on the White Island/Whakaari Investigation.

Our thoughts are with the people of the Bay of Plenty as you prepare to endure another event that will have challenging ramifications for your local community.

Our investigation team has identified a number of persons/companies who conduct business relating to White Island. We have sought information from them that is relevant to the investigation and are now in the process of reviewing the information as it is provided to us.

The response to COVID-19 in New Zealand is impacting the progress of some elements of the investigation. We have a number of witnesses, family members and experts outside of New Zealand that have not yet been interviewed by WorkSafe. One of the impacts of COVID-19 is the fact that we will not be able to travel to meet with these people in person.

We will be working to understand how we can best facilitate speaking with these people without travel, and communicating closely with the New Zealand Police to establish a solution that does not compromise the investigation.