



Mayor Aksel makes an address at Tuurangawaewae poukai supported by CE, Maaori Ward Councillors and kaimahi

TOITUU PAANUI

TE PUTANGA TUAONO #6
MARCH 2026

Featuring

Mayor Aksel Bech

IAWAI - Flowing Waters

From the Frontline

Our District, Our Stories

Waikato
District Council
Te Kaunihera aa Takiwaa o Waikato

LEADING OUR DISTRICT WITH MAYOR AKSEL BECH

Recent flooding in our neighbouring councils caused significant devastation, impacting waterways and communities. While the awa was affected, I want to reassure our residents that we have reserves in place to protect our drinking water. We deployed 35 of our staff to assist Otorohanga Council during the time of their declared civil emergency, and we will continue to support our neighbouring councils through this time. Our thoughts are with those communities as they recover.

I strongly encourage everyone in our district to get involved with council. Participating in public forums is a great new way to share your views and be heard, and you can contact our Democracy Team if you want to join.

We are also promoting the Community Voice Panel that gives whaanau and community members an opportunity to contribute directly to council decisions early in our processes rather than right at the end when many feel it is too late.

Maintaining strong relationships with our Maaori communities is very important to me. The recent Maurea Marae poukai in Rangiriri, the Tuurangawaewae Marae poukai, and the regatta at Tuurangawaewae Marae - one of the region's largest cultural river events - highlight the rich culture and aspirations of our whaanau and iwi.

These events provide important opportunities for council to acknowledge, support, and learn from the diverse Maaori kaupapa that contribute significantly to our communities.



Mayor Aksel Bech

With Matatini coming to our doorstep, it is exciting to see Waikato-Tainui bringing this incredible celebration of Maaori culture and talent to life. I am also proud that 28 Marae have signalled their interest in advancing Toituu Marae, creating opportunities to further strengthen our cultural, social, and community connections.

Our district reaches from the river to the sea, at the heart of everything we do is the belief that our communities are central to our district's wellbeing. By working together, council, whaanau, and iwi, we can respond to challenges, celebrate our culture, and build a stronger Waikato for the future. Let's keep talking, connecting, and working together.

EXECUTIVE INSIGHTS WITH CE CRAIG HOBBS

At the end of 2025, our Manu Taaiko team organised a small Tira Hoe. Ten kaimahi climbed into a double-hulled waka ama and paddled the awa together, not for fitness, not for competition, but to learn.

As a council, we talk about development, infrastructure and growth. But understanding how we develop starts with understanding the land beneath our feet and the stories that shaped it.

Ngaaruawaahia was once renowned for its burrows, large food storage pits used by local hapuu to feed the many visitors who arrived at their doorsteps. They were, in many ways, like massive haangii pits. That history tells us something important. This place was designed for manaakitanga, for hosting, for abundance.

When we understand that narrative, we can make better decisions alongside developers, decisions that protect and honour this unique history while still enabling thoughtful growth. Development does not need to erase story; it can sit alongside it.

The awa had her own lessons for us that day. Up close, you see the changes in water quality, degradation points, and the pressures she carries, pressures we as a council have a responsibility to manage.



**Tumu Whakarae
Craig Hobbs**

If we are to be good stewards of this district, we must step beyond meeting rooms and reports to truly understand the places we serve.

Lastly; across council and committee forums we've seen Maaori-led kaupapa progressing, including support for a pou in Taupiri recognising local history and whakapapa. In Raahui Pookeka, proposals include leasing buildings to Matawhaanui Trust for a wellbeing hub and to Te Ruunanga o Ngaati Naho for a cultural hub.



TOITUU MARAE *SET TO PROGRESS*

You may have seen an article written by the Waikato Times discussing the outcome of the Waikato District Māori wards referendum and comments about the council's work with marae across the district.

Following the 2025 local election, a binding referendum resulted in voters choosing to remove Māori wards from the Waikato District Council governance structure from 2028.

While the referendum determines the structure of council representation, Waikato District Council remains committed to working in partnership with iwi, hapuu and marae across the district.

Mayor Aksel Bech says Māori communities remain a significant part of the district, and council will continue to support their involvement in local decision-making.

"About a quarter of our population identifies as Māori. That is a significant part of our community and it's important we continue to give effect to that by working closely with iwi, hapuu and marae," he said.

Council is continuing to strengthen existing partnerships, including through the Toituuu Marae programme, a collaborative initiative between Waikato District Council and Waikato-Tainui, focused on building the resilience, wellbeing and long-term sustainability of marae across the district.

Māori Ward councillors Tilly Turner and Endine Dixon-Harris also acknowledged the referendum outcome while reinforcing the importance of maintaining strong relationships with Māori communities.

They said while they were disappointed by the result, they respected the outcome of the democratic process and remain committed to building relationships that endure beyond electoral structures.

The councillors also highlighted the important role marae play as central hubs for their communities, particularly as places of support and connection during times of need such as public health or civil defence emergencies.

Waikato District Council remains committed to working constructively with mana whenua and Māori communities to ensure their voices continue to inform council decision-making and the future of the district.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS *WHY TOITUU MARAE IS IMPORTANT*

Local government is the level of government closest to everyday life.

It affects:

- The roads you drive on and the rubbish you put out
- The parks your tamariki play in and the water in your pipes
- The growth of your towns and marae communities

These are everyday issues, but they carry long-term impact for our people and our places. Toituu Marae Forums are one way to ensure marae voices are present, visible, and influencing what comes next.



FROM THE FRONTLINE

WITH YOUR MAAORI WARD COUNCILLORS



Endine Dixon-Harris

As Tai Raro Māori Councillor for the rohe of Waikato, I believe strong Māori representation in council chambers is more than principle, it is action.

It means being prepared, asking the hard questions, and standing firm when decisions affect our marae, whenua, hapuu and iwi. I am proud to serve our community across the Waikato district and to champion kaupapa that uplift whaanau.

One powerful reminder of why I'm here came during robust debates where our people's interests were at stake. I will never shy away from those moments.

Our Māori place names, like Pookeno, must be upheld with mana, they are not mispronounced novelties, but taonga.

The upcoming Te Matatini in Hopuhopu in 2027 is an exciting opportunity to showcase the Māori economy and performing arts on a national and global stage.

I was also inspired attending Te Maruata hui under Local Government New Zealand, seeing growing Māori representation across Aotearoa. To our rangatahi, I hold close the words of Kiingi Taawhiao: Ki te kotahi te kaakaho ka whati, ki te kaapuia e kore e whati. Alone we are weak, together we are strong.

Every time I take my seat, I bring commitment, participation and action, for our people, and for our future.

I encourage our whaanau to enrol for the upcoming general election, and become a beacon of hope.

E tuku ana i ngaa mihi aroha ki a koutou ngaa marae, ngaa maataawaka, me te whaanau Pasifika across the many communities of Waikato. As 2026 unfolds, council work is well underway.

Of deep concern to me is the loss of the Māori seats and the need to protect strong Māori representation at the table.

For me, that strength was shaped long before I entered the chamber. It began on the marae listening to whaanau, carrying their stories, and understanding that leadership is service.

That same responsibility guides me now. As Kiingi Tuheitia Potatau Te Wherowhero Te Tuawhito reminded us, what is good for Māori is good for everybody.

Recently, during an infrastructure meeting, councillors unanimously supported a relationship-building approach that upheld the direction of Te Arikinui Kuini Ngawai hono i te po and the enduring call of "not one inch more."

It was a powerful reminder that our tikanga and history must shape decisions about our whenua. If I could shift one mindset across Aotearoa, it would be the myth that Māori "double dip." Few understand that settlements, including Waikato's were only a fraction of what was taken. Teaching our true history in every school matters.

To our rangatahi: stand tall. Your voice belongs in every room. Each time I take my seat, I bring a focused Māori lens ensuring our people are seen, heard, and valued.



Tilly Turner

When Māori thrive, our whole district thrives with us.

Noo reira, maa te Atua taatou e tiaki, e manaaki. Paimaarire ki a taatou katoa.



HAMILTON
CITY
COUNCIL

WAIKATO
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

WAIKATO
-TAINUI

IAWAI

LIFE RUNS
ON WATER

HAMILTON.
GOVT.NZ/
IAWAI

KIA ORA, WE'RE YOUR NEW WATER PEOPLE

IAWAI is your new water organisation, publicly owned by Waikato District and Hamilton City councils and working in partnership with Waikato-Tainui.

To read the **Water Services Strategy** and share your feedback before 6 April 2026.

[**CLICK HERE**](#)

HAVE YOUR SAY!

If your marae or organisation would like to be part of the **new papakaainga housing discussions**, please contact Amomai Pihama
Amomai.Pihama@iawai.co.nz



From 1 July 2026, we'll be responsible for delivering drinking water and wastewater services Waikato and Hamilton communities. Stormwater services will remain council-owned, operating under contract.

This change brings together the resources and expertise needed to deliver water services more efficiently, comply with new regulations and meet our communities' growing needs.

- You'll continue to receive the same water services.
- If you have any water-related issues, please contact council.
- Water charges on your rates invoice will be itemised more clearly.
- You will still receive metered water usage invoice, twice yearly.
- You'll continue to pay for water using the same payment options.

Let's work together for better water

IAWAI has released its first Water Services Strategy.

This strategy begins and ends with the health and vitality of the Waikato River, the moana and the communities they sustain.

It is grounded in Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato and sets out the plans, priorities and charges that will shape water services over the next 10 years.

Our Strategy proposes the introduction of water and wastewater growth charges for new builds. The intention is that the cost of growth is met by those creating the additional demand, rather than by existing households.

As part of this work, we also need to understand how any growth charges might apply to new papakaainga housing.

IAWAI would like to koorero with interested parties about the proposal, what it could mean for new papakaainga development, and how we can shape an approach that works for whaanau and IAWAI.

2026 ELECTIONS

START PREPARING YOUR WHAANAU NOW

The 2026 General Election is coming up and this is your reminder to get ready now.

WHAT TO DO NOW

- *Check you're enrolled*
- *Update your address if you've moved*
- *Enroll if you haven't already*

WHY IT MATTERS

Your vote helps decide:

- *Who leads Aotearoa*
- *How funding supports our kura, whaanau, communities*
- *Decisions about whenua, housing and te taiao*
- *The future our tamariki will grow up in*
- *Our voices are heard when we ALL SHOW UP!.*

ENROL NOW
[CLICK HERE](#)

ELECTION DAY
Saturday 7 November
2026



WAIKATO LOCAL MOBILISES FOR 2026 ELECTIONS

Waikato Local is gearing up for the 2026 General Election, building on last year's momentum to ensure our communities are informed, enrolled, and ready to vote.

With changes to enrolment and voting rules, the focus is on early engagement sharing practical information, supporting participation, and strengthening community outreach.

First Hui

Monday 30 March, 6.00pm – 8.00pm
YWCA (The Chapel), 28 Pembroke Street
Kai provided

The session will focus on enrolment, understanding the new rules, and how we can mobilise our communities.

All are welcome bring your networks and be part of the collective effort.

RSVP to: Kirsty Barber
kawena@taurikura.com



Taurikura

WORLD SURF LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP TOUR IS COMING TO RAGLAN

Raglan will host the New Zealand Pro, the fourth stop on the **World Surf League Championship Tour**, in May 2026.

Event window: 15 – 25 May 2026.

This is an 11-day window to allow flexibility around surf and weather conditions. Competition is expected to run for approximately four days within that window. Not every day will be a competition day, and confirmed dates will be published closer to the event.



SAFETY AND CROWD MANAGEMENT

- Review and approval of traffic and pedestrian management plans
- Safe viewing areas and clear pedestrian routes
- Emergency access maintained at all times.

WHAT TO EXPECT CLOSER TO MAY 2026

As planning and approvals are finalised, confirmed details will be published, including:

- **Competition schedule:** which days will run within the 15–25 May window
- **Access to Manu Bay:** what stays open, what may be temporarily restricted during competition periods, and arrangements for lay days (non-competition days)
- **Parking and traffic:** where to park and any drop-off zones
- **Noise and activity:** build and pack-in times, event hours, and busy periods
- **Local services:** toilets, first aid points, accessibility information.

Location: Manu Bay, Raglan

Who's competing: The top 36 men's and 24 women's international surfers.

This event is run by the World Surf League. Council's role is to carry out its regulatory responsibilities and manage local impacts, including public access, safety, and traffic.

MINIMISING DISRUPTION

- Advance communication of any access or traffic changes
- Traffic management to support safety and emergency access
- Guidance for residents, commuters, and local businesses.

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

- Event conditions requiring waste management and environmental controls
- Monitoring compliance during the event
- Removal of temporary infrastructure and reinstatement of the site following pack-down.

SPECIAL ALCOHOL LICENCE

A special alcohol licence application has been received for the sale and supply of alcohol at Manu Bay during the WSL competition days. Public notices with full details of this application are displayed at Manu Bay.

Any approval of an application is a decision for the District Licensing Committee. For more information, including any objection can be made:



CLICK HERE

A temporary alcohol ban for Manu Bay (for up to seven consecutive days, the legal maximum has also been proposed for Waikato District Council to consider at a council meeting on 8 April 2026.

If the Temporary Alcohol Ban Area were approved spectators would be prohibited from bringing their own alcohol to the event but would be able to purchase drinks from any controlled public bar operating under an approved special licence (if approved).

The special license (if approved) would enable the controlled sale and consumption of alcohol during the daytime on competition days. This ban had been made to support public safety and Kotahitanga during the event.



OUR DISTRICT OUR STORIES

*The journey and the
destination!*

COUNCILLOR PROFILE

NEWCASTLE-NGĀRUAWĀHIA GENERAL WARD COUNCILLOR

There's something powerful about being shaped by the place you call home. For this Waikato District Councillor, Taupiri isn't just where he lives — it's where his story began.

I was brought up in Taupiri and still proudly call it home today. From starting my education at Taupiri School to raising (along with my wife Kyly) our four grown children in and around the Taupiri-Horotiu area. This community has shaped who I am, and I remain deeply connected to the people and land of our district.

I am a farmer by trade, and farming has given me a practical outlook and a strong appreciation for resilience, hard work, and stewardship of the land. It has also reinforced for me how important strong, sensible local governance is for our communities.

I am currently serving my first term as a Waikato District councillor and am also a member of the Taupiri Community Board.

I chose to stand for council because I felt a more commonsense, financially disciplined approach was needed in Council Chambers. I believe ratepayers deserve careful decision-making, transparency, and value for money.

Grant Coombes



In addition to my council roles, I serve on the board of the Rural Support Trust, which supports the wellbeing and mental health of rural families. Looking after our people, especially during challenging times, is something I consider vitally important.

I remain committed to representing our district with fairness, practical thinking, and a strong local voice, working to ensure Waikato remains a place where families and communities - both urban and rural - can thrive.

SUPPORTING EVENTS

THAT BRING US TOGETHER

For Josh Cowan, supporting local kaupapa Maaori events is simply about giving back to the community that raised him.

Events like Tuurangawaewae Regatta, Koroneihana, the Tainui Games and sports tournaments at Hopuhopu draw huge crowds, often 10,000 to 15,000 people, and make a significant contribution to the district's economy. **But what many people don't see is the work behind the scenes.**

As Contract Manager South at Waikato District Council, Josh works closely with contractors, suppliers, and stakeholders to coordinate the planning that supports major events across the district.

From traffic management and road maintenance considerations to on-the-ground coordination, his role helps make sure the right systems are in place behind the scenes.

For Josh, it is a chance to use his skills in a practical way, supporting the people, places, and events that matter to Waikato.





TURANGAWAEWAE ANNUAL REGATTA

Turangawaewae Regatta marked 130 years in March, drawing thousands back to the banks of the Waikato River. Waikato District Council, Hamilton City Council and IAWAI, were there getting amongst it.

Originally hosted at the point in Ngaaruawaahia the regatta transitioned over to Turangawaewae in the 1970s and has grown strength by strength since.

Generations of whaanau have carried this kaupapa, upholding tikanga, connecting with the awa, and honouring the Kiingitanga in a way that doesn't need to be explained. People feel it when they hear the haka roaring down the river banks, see kapa haka come to life on the barge, and experience traditional waka taua saluting our Ariki. The tradition is heard, seen, felt and experienced.

Corporate waka ama teams racing for bragging rights while building real relationships with the awa.

There's an understanding that comes with that - if you're here, you're connected to the river, and with that comes a responsibility to her health and wellbeing.



This year we were fortunate to hear from Kuiini Ngawai hono i te po. Her message of te reo o te awa, te reo o te taiao actively listening to the voice of our rivers, moana, waterways and our environments. She spoke about bringing iwi, marae, scientists, taiao experts, partners and indigenous voices together to waananga, to find ways forward grounded in integrity-tanga.

Kaimahi from WDC, IAWAI and Hamilton City Council joined Waikato District Council Mayor Aksel, Councillor Turner, CE Craig Hobbs and IAWAI CE Peter Winder to gather community voice and educate whaanau on the cycle of water. The model shown in the photo demonstrates how water moves from the awa to our taps, through our homes, then out as wastewater that gets treated and returned back to the environment.

130 years on, the Turangawaewae Regatta is thriving and vibrant while upholding tradition.



REVIEW OF MAAORI FREEHOLD LAND RATING STATUS NOW UNDERWAY

Council is currently carrying out a **review of the rating status of land classified as Maaori freehold land**. The purpose of this work is to make sure our records accurately reflect how the land is being used today, and to ensure whaanau are receiving the correct rating treatment.

Why are things changing?

The Local Government (Rating of Whenua Maaori) Amendment Act 2021, which came into effect on 1 July 2021, introduced new rules designed to reduce barriers for owners of Maaori freehold land.

These changes aim to support whaanau who want to use, occupy, or build homes on their whenua by ensuring the rating system is fair, consistent, and does not place unnecessary pressure on landowners.

What we're doing now

Over the next few weeks, Council will be contacting Maaori freehold landowners by letter or email.

These will be sent out in small batches, beginning with those who are most likely to be affected by the legislative changes.

This process is part of our commitment to keeping our records up to date and making sure each parcel of land is assessed correctly.

What this may mean for landowners

Under the updated legislation:

- Wholly unused Maaori freehold land is non-rateable
 - some targeted rates may still apply.
- Partially unused Maaori freehold land may be eligible for rates remission
 - which could reduce the amount of rates charged.

These provisions are intended to support the sustainable use of whenua Maaori and to make it easier for whaanau to develop and reconnect with their land.

Need support or have questions?

If you have any paatai or concerns about your land or the rating review, our team is here to help.

0800 492 452 — **ask for the rates team**

info@waidc.govt.nz

[waikatodistrict.govt.nz/maaorifreeholdland](https://www.waikatodistrict.govt.nz/maaorifreeholdland)

We encourage all Maaori freehold landowners to get in touch with Council if they would like advice, more information, or guidance through the process.

BUILDING ON LEGACY

NGAATI NAHO TO REVITALISE HUNTLY I-SITE

The former i SITE building on Great South Road, Raahui Pookeka Huntly, will be transformed into a cultural heritage, recreation and education hub under a new community lease granted to Te Ruunanga o Ngaati Naho.

Te Ruunanga o Ngaati Naho proposes to activate the building as a space that strengthens connections to the Waikato River, supports rangatahi (youth) development, and expands cultural and recreational opportunities for whaanau across the district.

Their plans include establishing a cultural heritage and education hub delivering educational programmes, cultural experiences and workshops for youth and whaanau.

The proposal includes hosting community sports programmes and cultural gatherings, supporting the Rangiriri Cultural Sports Club, and delivering youth development initiatives through grants, workshops and environmental kaupapa in partnership with local marae.

Council will now work alongside Te Ruunanga o Ngaati Naho to repair and restore the vacant building so it can support this expanded programme of activity.

Tai Raro Maaori Ward Councillor Endine Dixon-Harris welcomed the decision.

"This is a great outcome for the haponi (community), particularly for our rangatahi and their ability to participate on the awa," she said.

"It is about beautifying the site, strengthening connection to the awa and the whenua, and supporting our tamariki (children) to see themselves reflected in spaces like this. This is what Maaori participation in our communities looks like in its true sense."

Huntly ward councillor David Whyte said the proposal demonstrated both capability and commitment.

"This application was clearly the strongest from the community. Te Ruunanga o Ngaati Naho bring the skills and manaakitanga (support) to reinvigorate this building as a genuine community asset," he said.

Restoration planning will begin in partnership, with further updates to be shared as the project progresses.



COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS FOR LORENZEN BAY RESERVE RECOGNISED

Raglan's Kirikiripuu Catchment Care group has been given the green light for their community-led Waikookoowai/ Lorenzen Bay Reserve Restoration and Development Plan, which outlines a shared vision for its future care, ecological restoration, and use.

Lorenzen Bay Reserve has become a focal point for community-led ecological restoration and recreational development, with local residents actively involved in improving the reserve since 2013.

The four-hectare reserve is located in the eastern area of Raglan, and encompasses a diverse landscape of coastal wetland, stream ecosystems and lowland forest. The reserve's Waikokowai Stream flows from the slopes of Kirikiripu puke/hill to Lorenzen Bay in Whaangaroa Harbour.

The plan means volunteers will be able to work collaboratively with council, within the Kirikiripuu Catchment Care umbrella to participate in projects on the reserve. This approach will ensure that volunteers and council are working towards a common goal on the reserve.

Consultation on the amendments to section 2.6.2 Lorenzen Bay Reserve of the Natural Reserves Management Plan 2018 was open from 31 October 2025 to 1 December 2025, and 34 submissions were received.

Overall, submitters supported the proposed approach to conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, and that it was good to see a focus on ecological enhancement and supported improved access within the wetland area.

Whaangaroa general ward councillor Lisa Thomson acknowledged the work of Kirikiripuu Catchment Care, the community and iwi to develop the plan.

"This group of volunteers are on the ground doing the mahi to help restore and enhance the reserve, and it's great to see this community-led plan formally endorsed. The plan supports long-term stewardship of this important natural space and provides a framework for its implementation."

Kirikiripuu Catchment Care coordinator Rebecca Eivers says they are delighted at the support from the Whaangaroa community through the consultation.

"The endorsement of our plan enables our group of hard working, committed volunteers to continue to restore and develop the reserve, an area that is precious to us all."

"We are grateful to Waikato District Council and staff for their support, and to everyone who helped develop the Waikookoowai / Lorenzen Bay Reserve Restoration and Development Plan. It brings together over 10 years of community work and outlines ideas for the future including native planting, better access, nature play areas, and educational signs."

Waikato District Council will now work with Kirikiripuu Catchment Care to draft the volunteer agreement outlining the works able to be carried out on the reserve.

Open Spaces Services Manager Glyn Morgan says that while general ideas from the plan are being endorsed, Kirikiripuu Catchment Care will have parameters in their volunteer agreement as to what they can undertake and what council can deliver to support the project.

Infrastructure, including access upgrades, benches, boardwalks etc. would require approval from council staff prior to being undertaken. As part of that process local feedback from the community will be sought.

BEHIND THE SCENES @ WDC

Updates from the engine
room!

GROWING LEADERS

INTERN SPENDS SUMMER WITH IWI AND COUNCIL

What does local government really look like from the inside? For Hinewaitangi Ratu, a proud uri of Tuhoe and Waikato, this summer has offered a rare, behind-the-scenes view. Not just of council processes, but of what partnership can look like when relationships lead the work.

Hinewaitangi applied for the 2025/2026 Summer Taiao – Policy Internship to reconnect with her iwi and to strengthen her skills ahead of returning to her third year at the University of Waikato. What she found was more than work experience, it was clarity about where she wants to stand and serve.

Shared between Waikato-Tainui and Waikato District Council, the internship placed her in spaces where iwi and council priorities meet; in policy discussions, environmental planning, and the everyday decisions that shape the future of our communities.



"It has been an absolute privilege," Hinewaitangi says. "This internship has stretched and shaped me in ways I didn't expect." Beginning in December, she quickly found herself immersed in the rhythm of local government.

From policy development to understanding council processes, she saw firsthand the scale of responsibility carried quietly behind office doors.

"Often councils are reduced to rates notices and parking fines," she reflects. "But that's only about one percent of what they actually do. Behind the scenes there's so much care and long-term thinking, planning for future generations, protecting the environment, strengthening communities."

Her time within Waikato-Tainui offered an equally rich perspective. She gained insight into the breadth of the iwi's work; from housing and education initiatives to employment pathways and environmental programmes and the strategic frameworks that sit behind them.

"In a short time, I could see how intentional the work is. There's real vision there; transformational outcomes for our people."

One of her favourite memories came early in the internship: a kumara planting session.

"It was informative and hands-on; such a good practical day," she says. "It made my first week exciting and grounded everything in the whenua. It reminded me why this mahi matters."

Her summer will finish in true rangatahi fashion: performing for her iwi at Maataatua Regionals before she returns to the University of Waikato to begin her third year of study.



FORMER STATE HIGHWAY 1 TO RETURN TO COUNCIL MANAGEMENT

The stretch of road between Taupiri and Huntly formerly part of State Highway 1 will soon return to the care of Waikato District Council as part of the local roading network.

The road has been managed by NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) since the Waikato Expressway opened.

Before it is formally handed back, NZTA is funding a package of agreed safety and resilience improvements, with council responsible for delivering the work.

On 16 February, NZTA and council signed a revised contract outlining the scope of works.

This updates the original 2022 agreement to reflect current market conditions and includes adjustments to the programme of work.

Funding for the project is capped at \$14.158 million, with the majority provided by NZTA.

What work is planned?

The project team is currently developing a start-to-finish programme, including procurement planning, supplier briefings and coordination with key stakeholders such as WEL Networks and KiwiRail.

Investigations and testing are underway to identify areas needing repair. Sections under review include the road from Taco Bell to the urupaa, the Tainui Bridge Road intersection, and the road north of Tregoweth Lane.

Council is also assessing whether the existing passing lanes will remain. This involves weighing up costs and benefits, conducting safety assessments particularly for southbound traffic and right-turning vehicles into nearby residential properties and seeking specialist external advice.

While council must work within the framework of the original business case, discussions with NZTA are ongoing.

Planned improvements include:

Replacement of a collapsed culvert

Upgrades to Fletcher Street, Main Street, the Bell Crossing, and the Te Pute intersection

Installation of new LED street lighting

A right-turn bay and pedestrian rest stop near the urupaa

Targeted kerb, channel and drainage improvements

Over the next six months, the focus will be on design and consenting. Physical works are expected to begin in October 2026, with completion anticipated by the end of 2027, subject to consenting and coordination with utility providers.

Council will provide regular updates as the project progresses, particularly ahead of any construction activity.

For more information, residents can contact:

Richard Cowie,
Project Director
021 0222 1869

Darren Bourne,
Transport Capital Manager
027 230 7128



Our Manu Taaiko team has been busy behind the scenes working across a number of kaupapa affecting our district. We need our whaanau to stay up to play, help educate your whaanau, and be active in shaping our communities. Here's a few significant kaupapa on the horizon.

THE LONG TERM PLAN (LTP)

WHERE YOUR RATES GO

Every council must produce a Long Term Plan every ten years and reviewed every year through a process known as the Annual Plan.

The LTP decides:

- what infrastructure gets built
- how much councils borrow
- how much rates increase
- where investment goes across the district.

These plans guide billions of dollars of spending nationally on infrastructure and community services.

Why this matters

The LTP determines things like:

- new roads or upgrades
- water infrastructure
- community facilities
- environmental projects
- rates increases.

When communities make submissions, councils must consider those views before decisions are made.

Stay connected! We'll be reaching out to koorero and engage.

FROM WATER REFORMS

TO IAWAI FLOWING WATERS

Across the country, councils are restructuring how water services are managed.

In many districts, new water organisations are being created to manage:

- drinking water
- wastewater
- stormwater infrastructure.

These entities are designed to improve investment in water infrastructure and ensure safe drinking water.

Why this matters

Water reform affects:

- future water infrastructure
- how water services are managed
- how much communities pay over time.

IAWAI is your local water entity. Stay connected and make a submission on their Water Services Strategy

[HERE.](#)

NATIONAL ELECTIONS

DECISIONS MADE IN WELLINGTON EFFECT US LOCALLY

National elections may feel distant, but decisions in Wellington directly affect our communities.

Central Government sets the laws that councils must operate under.

That includes decisions about:

- Local government reforms
- Water services and infrastructure
- Housing and development rules
- Environmental protections
- How councils fund and deliver services

Recent reforms affecting councils including water services changes and decisions around Maaori Wards have come from central government policy.

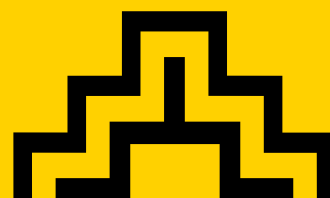
Why this matters

The Government elected at the national level determines the rules councils must follow.

That means the choices made at national elections can influence:

- how water services are managed
- how local councils represent communities
- how infrastructure is funded
- how fast towns and cities grow.

Make sure you and your whaanau are enrolled to vote! Your whaanau's voice and votes shape our communities!





INSIDE MANU TAAIKO

WHERE INNOVATION MEETS ACTION

Protecting the health and wellbeing of the awa, moana and waterways was important

through the partnership between Waikato-Tainui, Hamilton City Council and Waikato District Council, Te Ture Whaimana is at the heart of IAWAI.

Now it's your turn! Read the Water Services Strategy and have your say by making a submission.

CLICK HERE

To access the Water Services Strategy

SO WE

are currently reviewing the rating status of land classified as Maaori freehold land.

CLICK HERE TO READ MORE

You wanted to learn more on rates on Whenua Maaori

SO WE

Community Voice Panel is being established to give Waikato District residents the opportunity to help shape local decisions.

CLICK HERE TO APPLY

You want to be part of decisions

Now it's your turn! If you want to be part of shaping local decisions

SO A

internal teams are working on a Traffic Management package to improve efficiency and coordination.

You needed support with Traffic Management at big kaupapa

SO OUR

YOU TOLD US



Kaimahi learn about the awa, local history, environmental impacts and development.

*Stay connected to your community,
download the **Antenno App** to keep up with Council, report
what's happening around you, and have your say.*

[CLICK HERE](#)

To download the
ANTENNO APP