

Election call: Your community needs you!

Rural Community Board Chairperson Alan Taylor urges people in the rural community to think about standing for the Board at this year's election.



Alan Taylor

As October's local government elections approach, the Wanganui Rural Community Board would like to thank retiring members Cr Nicki Higgie, Mark Lourie and Dave Johnston.

But, more than replacing them, the community will benefit from a suite of candidates for the incoming Board.

Elections are democratically healthy and have the potential to identify candidates with vision and community leadership skills.

Currently there are no women directly elected to the Board and we would welcome a chance to rectify this anomaly because our structure and deliberations should better reflect those of the whole community.

"Please be bold, optimistic and consider standing up for your community.
WE NEED YOU!"

The Board has seven elected members from three subdivisions. Its work is wide ranging and co-operative with that of the Wanganui District Council from whom we have enjoyed amazing support. The Council is confident that we are the rural voice of Wanganui.

The WRCB is recognised as one of the nation's best community boards. Our tasks are intellectually and socially rewarding.

Our achievements, particularly over the past two terms, have been outstanding and we really encourage prospective members to become part of the continuance of that success.

Please be bold, optimistic and consider standing up for your community. We need you.



Local Elections 2013

**YOUR VOTE
YOUR COMMUNITY**

Want to talk about rural issues?

Wanganui Rural Community Board represents the interests of our rural sector within the community and at the Wanganui District Council table. The Board members invite you to contact them to discuss matters affecting the rural community.

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Community Boards Conference: Wanaka

Alan Taylor

Three Wanganui Rural Community Board members attended May's biennial New Zealand Community Board Conference in Wanaka.

I am pleased to announce we received the Supreme Award for 'best practice' for our work in rural broadband extension.

Considering the quality of competitive projects entered, this made us proud. The awards highlighted the important and commendable work undertaken at community board level throughout the country.

Community leadership and engagement flowed thematically through the conference with truly inspirational stories about the projects overseen by leaders from localities as widely dispersed as Edmonton, Seattle and Christchurch. Such success and enthusiasm is, however, not universal.

Through interacting with other community board members at the conference I feel confident in our constructive relationship with our Council. This cohesive strength is critical in achieving the beneficial outcomes that flow from community engagement at every level.

The conference reinforced that community boards are here to stay, that they will grow in strength and that they have a vital role in ensuring that local decision-making is a hallmark of good government. My plea is for you all to be part of this by becoming a candidate for this October's election, as you will have read on the cover of this edition of *Hotwire*. For more information about how to become a candidate, please read the article below.

Countdown to close of nominations for candidates

If you are thinking of standing for election for the Wanganui District Council, Wanganui Rural Community Board or the Whanganui District Health Board, time is running out.

The deadline for nominations is 12.00 noon on Friday, 16 August 2013. Elections will be held for the Mayor and 12 Councillors to represent the Wanganui District. Candidates are also sought for the Wanganui Rural Community Board, which represents rural voters in the Kai Iwi, Whanganui and Kaitoke subdivisions. Candidates are also sought to make up seven members for the Whanganui District Health Board.

Potential candidates must include a profile statement, photograph and a \$200 fee when they submit their nomination. Candidates must also be nominated by two people on the electoral roll. The only criteria is that a candidate must be a New Zealand citizen and on the electoral roll. Electoral Officer Noeline Moosman is available to help anyone who is interested in running as an elected representative, for the Wanganui District Council, Wanganui Rural Community Board and the Whanganui District Health Board.

Local Elections 2013
**YOUR VOTE
YOUR COMMUNITY**

"I am very happy to talk anyone through the process. Candidates must submit all the information required for nomination at the same time, which varies slightly from the last election where they could drip feed it."

Noeline says that compared with the same time during the nomination period in the last local election, fewer nomination packs have come back to her.

"The deadline is strictly midday on Friday, August 16, so I urge people thinking of becoming candidates to put their packs together as soon as possible. If there is anything anyone thinking of running for the Council, Community Board or Health Board wants to discuss, I am here to help."

Noeline Moosman can be contacted at noeline.moosman@wanganui.govt.nz or on (06) 349 0001.



The deadline for candidate nominations is 12.00 noon on Friday, 16 August 2013.

Residents vote to contribute to bridge replacement

Andy Collins

'Bridge 46', commonly known as Wyley's Bridge, which crosses the Whangaehu River at the commencement of Mangamahu Road, is at the end of its useful life and due for replacement.

Built in 1957, the bridge was constructed mainly of timber, which has gradually deteriorated. In 1980 the timber trusses were replaced with steel beams and in 2000, three of the deteriorated transoms (or cross members) were repaired. A further inspection last year confirmed that several of the transoms had badly deteriorated while the remaining were not likely to last for more than two years. Weight restrictions were proposed, which would halt the movement of goods and services.

The situation became critical for Mangamahu residents, who rely predominantly on the bridge for access. As well as the social aspect, economic considerations are enormous, both for the valley and for Wanganui. Over 100,000 sheep, 5000 cattle, 500 tonnes of wool, 600 tonnes of kiwifruit and 1000 tonnes of maize travel over the bridge annually while inputs include 2000 tonnes of fertiliser. From the end of the decade, it is predicted a million tonnes of logs will flow out of the valley.

" It is imperative that we use the two-year window obtained by the repair of the transoms to build a new bridge and ensure the flow of goods and services in and out of the valley."

The obvious solution is the immediate construction of a new bridge, but there have been some complications. Access to the bridge is from Kauangaroa Road which is in the Rangitikei District. Traditionally, Rangitikei District Council has funded 50% of maintenance costs. However, that Council has concluded that Wanganui ratepayers have more to gain from a new bridge than their Rangitikei counterparts and have offered to fund only one-third of the local share. In addition, the New Zealand Transport Authority (NZTA), which normally funds 72% for infrastructure repairs, declined an application for funding a new bridge within the 2012-2015 period because the work fell below their threshold for infrastructure repair.

An emergency meeting organised by the WRCB was held at the Mangamahu Hall on July 1 to discuss options. Over 90% of ratepayers attended, along with Crs Stevens, McDouall and Anderson, Chief Executive of Wanganui District Council Kevin Ross, and his infrastructure and roading managers.

Infrastructure Manager Mark Hughes informed meeting participants that the most recent engineers' report from Opus suggested that if the rotten transoms were not replaced, axle weight restrictions would have to be placed on the bridge within five months, meaning loaded trucks could not travel over the bridge. However, replacing the transoms would avoid imposing such restrictions for two to three years, which would be sufficient time to build a replacement bridge.

The meeting requested that Council officers immediately ask NZTA to reconsider its previous decision in light of updated freight volume information and deterioration of the bridge, which was occurring more rapidly than previously expected.

A special rate is collected from Mangamahu ratepayers, originally for seal extension. The meeting proposed a contribution of \$200,000 be made from this fund towards the cost of a new bridge and that this money be made available immediately so the Council could commence geotechnical, survey and engineering investigations and designs without waiting for the NZTA decision.

This motion passed unanimously.

It is imperative that we use the two-year window obtained by the repair of the transoms to build a new bridge and ensure the flow of goods and services in and out of the valley.



Wyley's Bridge, which Mangamahu residents use to get in and out of their community. The community has supported maintenance work with a \$200,000 contribution.



Boarding allowances will be awarded to students who experience barriers to achieving educational success.

School boarding bursaries for rural and isolated students

Bill Ashworth

From 2014, boarding bursaries for rural and isolated students will change. This is the result of work of the "Boarding Allowance Project" at the Ministry of Education (MoE), undertaken earlier this year.

The bursaries are now called 'boarding allowances' and will be awarded to students who experience barriers to achieving educational success to at least NCEA Level 2. The new criteria are.

- **Geographical isolation**, where a student lives some distance (more than 60 minutes or greater than 60km) from an appropriate school or they are more than 20km from the MoE transport assistance programme.
- **Significant barriers**, where a young person's ability to achieve is hindered by past achievement, participation, behaviour, relationships or environment.

If a student currently receives a boarding bursary, this will continue with the same funding and conditions as present.

When a student is approved to receive an allowance it will continue for the duration of their schooling or until barriers to appropriate education no longer exist.

The changes have created considerable and varied discussion among rural groups. Some groups have claimed there has been a lack of consultation and the programme has eroded rural communities. However, supporters of the programme say this is a response to changing times.

There are currently around 13,000 rural students at boarding schools throughout New Zealand.

Applications closed on 31 July 2013. Applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application by 31 August 2013. From 2014, applications will close July 1 for the following year. You can find out more about the funding guidelines and apply for an allowance at www.minedu.govt.nz/parents/yourteen/boardingallowances.aspx.

Totalspan bus shelters

Mark Lourie

Thanks to Totalspan, almost 300 bus shelters have been put up around the country to shelter children waiting for school buses on cold, wet mornings. Wanganui's Totalspan franchise owners Mick Paul and Denise Vincent have helped local schools protect their students with nine shelters to date.

Children in Whangaehu, Upokongaro, Westmere, Kai Iwi, Kaitoke, Carlton, St Joseph's, Kakarama and Ohakune have benefited from the shelters. The next round will see 50 new shelters pop up around the country. In our wider region, additions are scheduled for National Park School at Tauhera Station and for UCOL students at State Highway 3 and Pukepapa Road south of Marton.



The project is a way for Totalspan to give back to the communities they live and work in. The bus shelter project is a partnership between Totalspan, local councils, NZTA, Federated Farmers, NZ Principals Federation, School Trustees Association and the Ministry of Education. It began in 2008.

The shelters are constructed with a steel frame and cladding and made from best quality steel designed to withstand New Zealand's climate. They are designed for high visibility while still being aesthetically pleasing.

If your school has a need for a shelter on any part of the school bus route, please get in touch with Denise Vincent on (06) 347 9842 or go to www.totalspan.co.nz.

Rural water meters



Darrell Monk

At this time of the year, most rural residents are probably worried about too much water, but come the warmer months, lack of water becomes a major problem for rural communities.

While we all enjoyed the long hot summer, the lack of rain was a significant factor for anyone with limited water supply and the cause of stress to both residents and stock.

Whether you are dairy farmer or a lifestyle block owner, the drought last summer was a timely reminder

about how we are reliant on regular rainfall to fill our water tanks and troughs.

The Wanganui District is fortunate to have readily available ground water to supplement the demand for water and rural residents are fortunate to have access to several rural water schemes at Maxwell, Brunswick and Fordell. These supply water to a large number of rural properties via metered water supply and provide welcome relief during the dry summer months.

If you are connected to a metered water scheme it is important to be vigilant in regard to water leaks, as this is your responsibility. Water meters are only read on a six monthly cycle, so a significant leak could result in a rather large and unwelcome bill if undetected. Residents with water meters are encouraged to know where their meter is located and how to read it. Regular monitoring of your meter will enable you to detect excessive water use due to a leak or other problem. Checking and recording your water usage monthly will over time provide you with a guide to your usual water consumption and the ability to detect excessive usage which may be the result of a leak.

Prior to 1 July 2010 the Wanganui District Council had a "leak policy" which enabled a rebate to be claimed for up to 10 cubic metres per day if a leak was proven to be the cause of the excess water consumption. This policy was revoked and residents now have the responsibility for water usage beyond the point of supply.

If you are unsure how to read your meter, or where it is located, please contact the Wanganui District Council on (06) 349 0001 and speak to the Infrastructure team who will assist you with your water needs.

Rural ratepayers' share of Council debt

Tex Matthews

The year after next, Wanganui District Council is predicted to be \$124 million in debt. The bulk of this debt has been made up from the wastewater plant, both in building the existing plant and building a new one.

Stormwater separation and water schemes - both new bores and water softening (some of which failed) - have also contributed.

All of the debt from these schemes is held against 18,000 to 19,000 urban ratepayers who benefit from these schemes.

Rural farming debt is around \$5 million. This is made up of a roading debt of around \$3 million and the other \$2 million is made up from our share of community facilities and general rate debt.

If you spread the \$5 million between 2000 rural ratepayers, it is \$2500 each.

The remaining \$119 million debt is spread between urban ratepayers, who have a much higher debt per property.

The interest on this debt currently averages 6.7%, so that is \$8.3 million spent in interest only. The rate increases for this year are:

Rural	4.5%
Commercial	1.8%
Residential	6%
Overall	5%

Personally I don't think that we are going hard enough to pay off debt. Next year's rate increase is predicted to be 8%, just to stay in the same place.

Permit required for grazing

By David Johnston

Grazing animals on the sides of road reserves maintained by the Wanganui District Council requires a permit. However, not all animal owners know this, so here is a refresher to make sure you are up-to-date. Stock grazing permits are **free** and **easy to get**.

You can download a permit from the "Animal Control" page on www.wanganui.govt.nz, fill it out, sign it and send it in to the Council. In the near future you will be able to complete an online permit. Watch this space!

Animal control officers also keep permits on them, so if you are grazing stock on a road reserve and do not have a permit they will be able to give you a permit then and there.

There are some other factors to be aware of when applying for a permit.

You must have adequate public liability insurance. You must also follow the regulations under the 'licence to occupy' clause in the Animal Control Bylaw which include installing an electric fence around grazing stock, safety reflectors and the permission of your neighbours if the fence borders their property. Stock must only graze during daylight. There are some other conditions too.

You can read all of the 'licence to occupy' restrictions under the 'Animal Control' page of www.wanganui.govt.nz.



A permit is required to graze animals on Council-maintained reserves, but it is easy to acquire.

Celebrate our community heroes

The search to showcase hardworking voluntary organisations is on, with the inaugural TrustPower Energy Direct Whanganui District Community Awards which opened on Monday, July 29.

Any group or organisation working for the benefit of the Wanganui District can be entered. Groups can also enter themselves. More than \$5000 in prize money will be awarded. The TrustPower Community Awards are run in 27 regions throughout New Zealand in conjunction with local councils. TrustPower Community Relations Coordinator Suzi Luff says TrustPower is excited about launching the awards in the Whanganui region.

"With TrustPower recently acquiring Energy Direct (the locally based electricity and gas retailer) these awards are the perfect way to give something back to the community that has welcomed us so warmly," says Suzi.

She says not all volunteers are recognised for the invaluable work they do and the awards are a chance for the community to say 'thank you'.

"It takes five minutes of your time to enter a voluntary group but it will make a real difference to the volunteers you are recognising."

The Wanganui District Council is working alongside TrustPower on this initiative to recognise voluntary organisations for the important part they play in our community. Entry forms for the Community Awards are available from Wanganui District Council offices or they can be downloaded from www.trustpower.co.nz/communityawards. Entry forms can also be received by calling TrustPower Community Relations on 0800 87 11 11 or the TrustPower Community Relations Team will take details of your entry over the phone.

The awards cover five categories: Heritage and Environment, Health and Wellbeing, Arts and Culture, Sport and Leisure, and Education and Child/Youth Development. Category winners receive \$500, runners-up receive \$250 and the Supreme Winner will take home \$1500 and an all-expenses paid trip to the TrustPower National Community Awards.

Entries close on Friday, 27 September 2013.

