

Hot Wire



Newsletter of the Whanganui Rural Community Board

Thrashed and trashed rural rubbish sites



The Kauarapaoa Road bin site is among several waste collection points in the Whanganui District that are being abused by illegal dumping

Rubbish collection and rubbish dumping in the Whanganui District is of significant concern to many rural residents. Whanganui District Council waste advisor Stuart Hylton comments.

Tackling waste is a growing challenge in both urban and rural areas in our district. For many rural folk the misuse of bag drop-off points and outer rural bins as well as the illegal dumping (or "flytipping") of waste at several of these sites has become a real concern.

There is also some anxiety in the rural community about the continuation of the current rural bag collection/drop-off systems now that rubbish bag collection within urban Whanganui will cease next year on 1 January 2021.

Whanganui District Council currently let a contract for the collection of approved rubbish bags from outside residents' properties on approved routes or at designated bag-collection points.

The council also lets a contract for the clearance of household rubbish from designated waste skip bins scattered through the outer rural district.

The good news is these two contracts are continuing in their current form until the end of June 2021. In the interim the council will review the contracts and levels of service to assess their suitability.

The council is also aware that bag drop-off points are being abused with the dumping of non-compliant rubbish – it's probable that some of this flytipping is by people outside of the rural community. The same behaviour also occurs at rural bin drop-off sites, often resulting in an unsightly mess. Collection changes are scheduled at some of these sites to help mitigate this problem.

"All Whanganui ratepayers pay the price to deal with [the dumping of non-compliant waste]"

Significant additional costs are incurred by the removal of non-compliant waste and clean-up at these sites, so the council is also introducing a flexible surveillance monitoring camera system in the worst areas to help identify these flytippers.

For legitimate rural users, please remember the bag collection or bin drop-off areas are for the disposal of household rubbish only – NOT whiteware, greenwaste, furniture, mattresses, or animal or toxic waste. Bags at drop-off points must have an approved sticker and comply with sticker requirements.

The dumping of non-compliant waste by some members of our community at rural collection sites means that all Whanganui ratepayers pay the price to deal with this issue.

The infringement fine for the illegal dumping of rubbish in the Whanganui District is \$400.00.

► **INSIDE: Snap Send Solve**

Report issues with Snap Send Solve

The Snap Send Solve smartphone app is a fast and easy way to report issues and incidents by sending photos to Whanganui District Council.

If you encounter something of concern while out in our district, such as illegally dumped rubbish – the example shown was taken on Papaiti Road – take a photo of it using the Snap Send Solve app on your smartphone and send it to Whanganui District Council.

The app works by identifying where your image was taken using your smartphone's GPS location. Choose the incident type, select Whanganui District Council's email address then send your photo in. Council Customer Services will log your incident report with the relevant team and send you a confirmation email.



The Snap Send Solve app is available for iPhone and Android operating systems and is free to download from the App Store and Google Play. Watch a how-to video and get more information at: www.whanganui.govt.nz/snap-send-solve

You're invited to LARFS@4 at Stellar

Whanganui & Partners' Strategic Lead – Agribusiness, Colleen Sheldon, has launched a series of sessions to build leadership, connections and opportunities across the Whanganui agribusiness sector.

Called **LARFS@4** – which stands for Lifestyle, Agribusiness, Rural and Farming Sessions – these sessions are held at 4.00pm every first and third Thursday of the month (except January) at Stellar Restaurant & Bar's Function Room, 2 Victoria Avenue.

LARFS@4 is a chance for the rural sector to get together and ask questions. Let's grow strong and resilient primary industries for Whanganui District and beyond. Expert speakers and dates for upcoming **LARFS@4** events are:

- **5 November 2020** – *Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme* – Chris Parsons, CEO, Rural Leaders
- **19 November 2020** – *Farm to factory for coarse wool* – Stephen Fookes, CEO, Wool Life NZ
- **3 December 2020** – *What's the noise on rural connectivity* – Craig Young, CEO, TUANZ
- **4 February 2021** – *Chasing the waves on local internet* – James Watts, CEO, Inspire Net
- **18 February 2021** – *How to transition your business for future success* – Bob Selden, Senior Consultant, Family Business Central

More info? Go to: www.whanganuiandpartners.nz/news

▶ **NEXT PAGE: Whanganui & Partners' Agribusiness Survey**

NEW BOARD CHAIR AND MEMBER WELCOMED

Well-known local farmer **Grant Skilton** has taken over the reins as Chair of the Whanganui Rural Community Board following Tex Matthews' decision to step down from the role at last year's local body elections.



Grant, who represents the Kai Iwi subdivision, previously served three years as Deputy Chair on the board. Grant and his family run a large-scale pork production and cattle grazing operation on farms at Westmere and Maxwell.

"I'm keen to continue the good work of the board in advancing the rural perspective in all decisions Whanganui District Council makes as well as leading the board to propose change in how rates are collected and spent in the rural community," Grant says.

As a significant rural community stakeholder, Grant says he's committed to ensuring the Whanganui rural community's perspective is reflected in all decisions made by the council.

Grant and the six board members are supported in their rural advocacy roles by Whanganui District Councillors, Charlie Anderson and Brent Crossan. ■

Peter Oskam – a long-standing Whanganui farmer and business owner – is the Whanganui Rural Community Board's new member for the Whanganui subdivision.



Peter was originally offered the chance to develop a block of scrub along the Whanganui River into a viable farming enterprise in the mid-1980s.

"That started a journey of rapid learning, experimentation and hard work covering sheep and beef, deer, goats, dairy heifers, bull-hire, kiwifruit and forestry," Peter says.

"What started as 300 hectares developed into an 800ha mix of forestry and intensive grazing."

Peter has worked extensively throughout his farming career with research institutions and the broader farming community, culminating in his role as Chair of the Whanganui region's Beef + Lamb Monitor Farm in 1989.

Eager to share his governance experience, Peter says, "I'm now at a stage where I want to give back to my community, the land and particularly the river that's shaped me into who and what I am." ■

Board and economic development agency team up for inaugural Agribusiness Survey



Colleen Sheldon from Whanganui & Partners' led an Agribusiness Survey recently with support from the board

Whanganui & Partners' inaugural Agribusiness Survey, conducted in partnership with the Whanganui Rural Community Board, was carried out in July.

Sent to landowners with properties of 10-hectares or more, the survey covered several themes – workforce, internet and mobile coverage (connectivity), land-use opportunities, succession planning, water supply, sources of information and rural waste collection.

The survey was launched to allow landowners who were looking to start, grow and/or enhance their rural business to explain what really matters to them.

The results will help both Whanganui & Partners and the Whanganui Rural Community Board gauge what's happening now, the strengths and weaknesses of the local agricultural sector, and what might be possible in terms of digital needs, value-add opportunities and learning capability.

We received a good response rate and thank everyone for their participation. Those who responded were involved in sheep and beef, dairy, goat, horticulture, forestry, arable, floriculture, bees, dairy support, pigs, deer, horses, and egg farming, with the majority coming from sheep and beef.

Full survey results will be released as separate topics over time and culminate in a final report. The two areas where results are available now are **workforce**, and **internet and mobile coverage**.

Information gathered from these and the other survey topics will help form a bigger picture of primary industries in Whanganui and together give context to various opportunities and barriers.

The survey will ultimately feed into a focused programme of work that will create stepping stones to reviving, revitalising and revolutionising agribusiness in the Whanganui District.

Workforce

The first topic to be analysed was workforce, which gave us the chance to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 and an opportunity to identify labour shortages. Some interesting findings include:

- About 30 percent of landowners who hire staff are anticipating work vacancies within the next 12 months. Some commented that contract labour would be affected by the uncertainty of migrant workers, particularly for planting.
- Nearly 50 percent of landowners were interested in supporting young people to gain work experience, while some were keen to see high-school career advisors promoting agriculture and wrap-around services as viable and interesting career options.



Internet and mobile coverage

The topic of internet and mobile coverage (or connectivity) in the survey provided strong evidence that poor rural connectivity is a challenge to agricultural businesses in the district.

The results found that while the majority of landowners have some form of internet access, rural landowners face obstacles conducting the same online tasks as urban residents. The figures from the survey also support anecdotal evidence I've heard from many sources in Whanganui's rural community. Survey results include:

- About 77 percent of our farmers and growers have access to the internet, but 73.3 percent of them report having download speeds below 10 Mbps (megabits per second). By comparison, New Zealand's average internet speed is 14.7 Mbps.
- Respondents highlighted the lack of reliable internet as a hardship, particularly when added pressure was put on the household connection during the COVID-19 lockdown. Cost was frequently cited as a barrier to a faster internet connection.
- Mobile coverage was another issue for rural landholders. Of those with smartphones, 66 percent reported having mobile coverage on only 50 percent or less of their land, while 16 percent reported no coverage at all.

Our district's farmers are at a distinct disadvantage in a number of ways because of this poor coverage. A lack of reliable connectivity makes it difficult to meet the growing needs for compliance, traceability and the uptake of agri-tech, as well as onfarm health and safety and the ability to attract new staff. ■

► **Colleen Sheldon** is Strategic Lead – Agribusiness at Whanganui & Partners, the economic development agency of Whanganui District Council.

Previously an Horizons Regional Councillor for nine years, Colleen plays an important role for Whanganui & Partners in supporting the primary sectors supply and value chain through co-ordinating and attracting growth alongside industry bodies, farmers, growers, Māori landowners, manufacturers and communities.

Email: colleen.sheldon@whanganuiandpartners.nz or call Colleen on 027 302 0432.

BOARD ROUND-UP

Have your say on our district's future with five Long-Term Plan surveys

Whanganui District Council is starting to draft its next Long-Term Plan for the Whanganui District.

The Long-Term Plan provides a road map for the next decade, from 2021-2031. It details where we aim to be, what we'll need to do to get there and how much it will cost. An important part of the process is engaging with the community, both urban and rural, to get your thoughts and ideas about the future for our district.

The Whanganui Rural Community Board encourages Whanganui's rural community to have their say on the council's vision for our district's future by taking a series of online surveys.

The surveys are an opportunity to share your thoughts on the council's proposed community outcomes and what concerns, ideas and aspirations you have for the future of our district.

There are five survey areas for you to consider – **Community, Connectivity, Creativity, Environment** and **Economy** – that the council intends to focus on in order to realise the vision of an energised, united and thriving district that offers abundant opportunities for everyone. Feel free to feedback on as many as you like.

These surveys will ultimately inform the council's Long-Term Plan 2021-2031 – so have your say! To complete these online surveys please visit: www.whanganui.govt.nz/long-term-plan

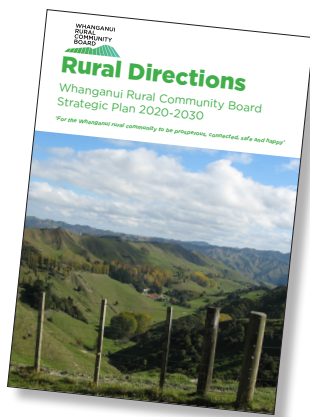
The board updates its strategic plan for the next 10 years

The Whanganui Rural Community Board's strategic plan for 2020-2030, **Rural Directions**, has been reviewed and updated, and is scheduled to be adopted by the board in November.

First developed in 2008-09, this guiding document is a 10-year plan for the board that covers the rural district and aligns with Whanganui District Council's planning processes.

Rural Directions describes the board's function as not only one of advocacy for the rural sector, but also as representation for the Whanganui community on wider issues that aren't strictly rural. Among specific roles the board will undertake is to communicate with community organisations and special interest groups within the community, and to prepare submissions on central government legislation where there are implications for the rural community. The board is established by statute and has its responsibilities and powers delegated by Whanganui District Council.

Once adopted, **Rural Directions** will be available online at: www.whanganui.govt.nz/WRCB – hard copies will also be available on request by emailing: Democracy@whanganui.govt.nz



The Whanganui Rural Community Board met with Alexandra Davids, chair of the Local Government New Zealand Community Board Executive Committee, via a Zoom call recently to hear about other community boards around the country and to gather new ideas on community engagement – thanks to Alexandra and LGNZ for your guidance.

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